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THE SALVE REGINA.

THE
Loving-Kindness of the Queen of Heaven
OR
THE SALVE REGINA

IN MEDITATIONS

BY
FATHER ANTONY DENIS, S.J.

A WORK SERVICEABLE ALSO AS A

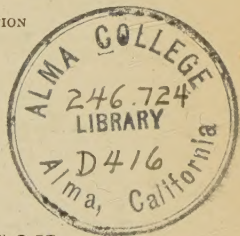
Month of Mary

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ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE,
MECHLIN, BELGIUM.

I gladly welcome the appearance of the "Month of the Queen of Heaven," and I have every confidence that this new "Month of Mary" will cause her to be known, loved, and faithfully invoked by a multitude of pious souls.

V. A. CARDINAL DECHAMPS,
Archbishop of Mechlin.

Mechlin, March 1st, 1883.

BISHOP'S PALACE,
GHENT.

TO THE AUTHOR.

REVEREND FATHER,

His Lordship, the Bishop of Ghent, commissions me to send you his approval of your beautiful book, the "Month of the Queen of Heaven."

Despite the large number of like works, written to promote the devotion of Catholics during the Month of May, I cannot doubt that your book will have its share in advancing the knowledge and love of the Mother of Jesus. You are not satisfied with speaking to the heart alone, you address the intellect, bringing into relief the great truths of our holy Faith, and you show that Catholic Doctrine is the foundation of all solid piety.

I congratulate you, therefore, and I beg the Blessed Virgin, whose intercessory power and motherly care of us you make so clear, to bless you and all those who read your book.

Accept, Reverend Father, the assurance of my sincere affection in Christ Jesus.

✠ GUSTAVUS LEONARD,
Bishop of Pella, Vicar-General.

Ghent, March 10th, 1883.

BISHOP'S PALACE,
 TOURNAI.

TO THE AUTHOR.

DEAR REVEREND FATHER,

I have read with lively interest your "Month of the Queen of Heaven." Your meditations upon the *Salve Regina*, well-stored with theology and full of unction, seemed to me admirably suited to increase the knowledge and love of the Mother of Mercy in the minds and hearts of the faithful. Hence, I very willingly add my approval to that of the Archbishop of Mechlin, and I pray God and the Queen of Heaven that your excellent work may produce all the spiritual fruit hoped for by its pious author.

Receive, Dear and Reverend Father, the assurance of my affection and attachment in Jesus Christ.

✠ ISIDORE JOSEPH,
Bishop of Tournai.

Tournai, March 11th, 1883.

BISHOP'S PALACE,
 LIEGE.

When I had finished reading, with much comfort and profit, your beautiful "Month of the Queen of Heaven," I could not help thanking the Sacred Heart, to which you are so devout, for having inspired you to write this book, and for having given you the grace to compose it in a style at once so pleasing, devout, solid, and in every way suited to promote the greater glory of God, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and, through her, the salvation of souls.

It will excite in the hearts of all, who read it devoutly, a profound veneration for the Queen of Heaven, a tender love of the glorious Mother of Jesus, our Mother also, and, above all, a sweet and staunch confidence in her all-powerful protection, and her matchless loving-kindness. Moreover, its copious, solid, and accurate teaching will enlighten your readers concerning the life and high dignity of the Immaculate Virgin, and the example and lessons of her Divine Son ; at the same time, it will provide them with thorough instruction, and confirm them in the practice of a truly Christian life.

Accept, therefore, Reverend Father, my warm and sincere congratulations, to which I add my hope that your book may have a wide circulation. You cannot, I am sure, doubt that it will be the means of causing very many to love and consecrate themselves to Mary, and through Mary to Jesus.

If this letter, which you have my authorisation to make public, should chance to meet the eyes of some poor slave of his passions, I conjure him, whatever may be his age, state of life, or deep-rooted habits of sin, to read your work : he will assuredly be greatly comforted, and, if he prays, he will become a changed man ; he will persevere in goodness and will save his soul.

Recommending myself to your prayers and to those of your readers, I send you my blessing, Dear Reverend Father, and I beg you to accept the homage of my lasting and affectionate esteem.

✠ VICTOR JOSEPH,
Bishop of Liege.

Liege, March 13th, 1887.

Dedication

TO

SAINT ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI

FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY
REDEEMER, AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH.



GREAT Saint, illustrious servant, and beloved son of Heaven's Queen, I offer thee this small and humble work of mine, which I have consecrated to her whom thou didst love so tenderly, and cause to be loved so largely. Pardon me that I have, after thyself, been bold to write a book on one of the most touching prayers which the Church addresses to the Mother of Mercy. I am conscious that, in spite of my having done my best, I have been unable to rival the deathless tribute thou hast paid to the glory of Mary. To speak as thou hast done of the glorious Mother of God, I ought to have the light of thy mind, the love and unction of thy heart, the holiness of thy life. But thy affection for our Blessed Lady will move thee to accept the dedication of my little book, because it has Mary for its theme,

and, being conversant to the full as thou ever wast, of the glories of the Queen of Heaven, thou wilt not despise the humble labour of a son of Ignatius, who reveres and loves thee. Accept then, O holy servant of God, so filled with light, humility, zeal, and love, this feeble homage of my veneration. Deign to present it with thine own hands to the Mother of God, that it may prove more acceptable to her; beg of her to give it her blessing, that through it she may be better known and better loved, and conjure her to bear with me and to be to me, especially at the hour of my death, a Mother of Mercy.

A. DENIS, S.J.

Louvain, August 2nd, 1882. v

They who wish to make use of these Thirty-one Meditations for a "Month of Mary," will do well to read, on the Eve of the First of May, the Introductory Exercise, which is to be found at the end of the Volume.

SALVE REGINA.

HAIL, holy Queen! Mother of Mercy, Hail! our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Salve Regina! Mater misericordiæ, vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve! Ad te clamamus, exules filii Evæ; ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes, in hac lacrymarum valle. Eia ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte. Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exilium ostende. O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria!

THE MEMORARE.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary! that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother! To thee I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word incarnate! despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

Memorare, O piissima Virgo Maria, non esse auditum à saeculo quemquam ad tua currentem præsidia, tua implorantem auxilia, tua petentem suffragia, esse derelictum. Ego tali animatus confidentia, ad te curro, ad te venio, coram te gemens peccator assisto. Noli, Mater Verbi, verba mea despicere, sed audi propitia, et exaudi. Amen.

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THE SALVE REGINA.

FIRST MEDITATION.

THE SALVE REGINA, OR SALUTATION WHICH THE CHURCH
ADDRESSES TO MARY.

 F we desire to preserve and increase within us a solid, and, at the same time, a filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin, it will not be sufficient to say certain prayers or to adopt certain exterior practices of piety. It will be principally by means of reading and meditation that the heart will derive fresh nourishment and the mind receive new-light. We must therefore confirm ourselves in love to Mary by frequently reading and meditating upon the mysteries of her life, her virtues, her greatness, her kindness, and the merciful exercise of her power; we must study the prayers which we are accustomed to offer to her, especially those most frequently used by the Church.

It is, then, on this account that we propose to take, as a subject for meditation, one of those beautiful petitions which the Church in her liturgy makes to the Queen of Heaven: the *Salve Regina*. Let us begin by examining into the origin and excellence of this antiphon, which has been on the lips of the faithful during so many centuries.

I.

Origin and Excellence of the Salve Regina.

A certain Count, named Herman Contractus, had abandoned the world for the love of Christ. Renouncing title, rank, and wealth, he joined the Order of St. Benedict, in the Monastery of St. Gall; and it was there that, in the year 1040, this pious monk—filled with the Holy Spirit, and moved by the love of the Blessed Virgin—composed the *Salve Regina*.

No sooner did the beautiful canticle appear than it was recommended to the use of the faithful by the bishops and other ecclesiastical authorities, but it was St. Bernard who helped the most, by his zeal and activity, to spread it abroad throughout the whole Catholic world.

Four instructions upon the prayer have been written by this great saint and doctor of the Church; from this work we will quote the following extract:

“Sweetest canticle, harmonious melody, song which falls from most honoured lips, composed by saints, made known by saints, worthy to be sung by saints! Canticle which can only be appreciated by those whose hearts are consecrated to God; so full of grace, so fruitful in sentiments of devotion, so deep in its mystery! It is so beautiful, so divine, that it cannot possibly be penetrated or explained as it deserves; but to all of us it speaks in tones of sweetness, and in all of us it excites pious affections. It penetrates the soul as with a fragrant incense and sinks into the depths of the heart, enkindling therein a fire of love towards our dearest advocate who is the highest among the saints. Can we refrain from loving as we salute her? when, by a pleasing fancy, we imagine that in uttering our salutation we see her? Yet, is this merely a fancy? Is it not rather, in a certain sense, a reality? If we, in fact, salute her as present in our midst; if we direct towards her all the

aspirations of our mind and heart, while addressing to her so sweet a prayer, does she not know, does she not love, those who love her? And is she not, in reality, listening to the supplication by which she is invoked?"

One day St. Bernard was in the town of Spire, and the clergy (knowing the fervour of his love for the Mother of God) invited him to be present in the Cathedral during the singing of his favourite canticle—the *Salve Regina*. When they came to the words, which were then the last: "And after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus," the saint sang out, as if carried away by love of Mary, this triple invocation: "Oh, clement! Oh, pious! Oh, sweet Virgin Mary!" kneeling each time. In remembrance of this pious act, and also of the visit of so great a saint, the three invocations were engraved on brass and let into the stone on which the three genuflections had been made. This relic is preserved in the Cathedral of Spire.

Two centuries after St. Bernard's death, St. Bonaventure (the worthy son of St. Francis of Assisi), being struck by the beauty of the *Salve Regina*, put it into verse.

Thus has this exquisite antiphon become known throughout the world. It forms part of the Canonical Office, and will be the song of the Church to the end of time.

There is a well-known and admirable work, replete with learning and unction, composed upon this same prayer by St. Alphonsus Liguori, and entitled: "The Glories of Mary." *

* At the time of writing this book, the author was not aware of a treatise, by Father Francis Coster, of the Society of Jesus, upon the *Salve Regina*. It is a masterpiece of doctrine as well as of devotion, and was written at a time when Protestant reform was most violently directed against the devotion to the Blessed Virgin. This work has lately been given to the public in a translation, published in the series, "La petite bibliothèque chrétienne."

II.

Salve: The Salutation of Mary.

The *Salve Regina* puts a picture before us. On the one side, there is represented the Blessed Virgin as present upon earth; on the other, we have the loving and yet sorrowful complaint which the children of Eve address to the Mother of Mercy—"Hail, our Queen!"

Hail! To salute anyone is to offer our wishes for his happiness; but it is not in this sense that we salute Mary. We congratulate her; for what is there to desire for the Queen of Heaven, or what could be added to her glory? She is, after Jesus, the first of all the company of Paradise; her glory, alone, is far greater than that of all the saints combined. But, although we can do nothing to augment the height and the wealth of glory which belongs to Mary, and although God has heaped upon her all the dignity He could bestow on a pure creature; if He has conferred on her an abundance of grace and glory corresponding to her exalted state, is it not fitting that we, who contemplate this great, this fair, this glorious Virgin, should delight in congratulating her, and rejoice in her glory and happiness? Is not this the proof of a true and filial love? And then, she is nearly related to us. For, why did she become the Mother of God? Is it not that she might thus become our Mother, and so make us the children of God and the brethren of Jesus Christ?

But, while we perceive the immense distance which separates our low estate from her glory, let us never allow ourselves to doubt as to whether our salutations are precious in her sight. Mary has become great, and yet remains simple and tender towards her poor children on earth. Just as she received the angelic salutation with humility and reverence, even so she receives our salutations with joy and love.

The rich of this world set little value on the salutations

of the poor, and reject those of the sinful ; but it is not so with the humble Virgin of Judea—the kind, the sacred Queen of Paradise. She has indeed reached the foot of the throne whereon is seated her Son, who is the Son of God ; but she is glad to receive the salutations of man. God knows with what tenderness she receives salutations offered her by those who live for Him only !

St. Bernard, who was one of the most favoured sons of Mary, had the habit of never passing before her image without ejaculating from the fulness of his heart: *Ave, Maria!* On a certain day, while on a journey in Belgium, he happened to be at the Abbey of Afflighem, near Termonde, and, seeing an image of Mary, said, as usual: *Ave, Maria!* In a distinct voice, there came from the statue, as a response: *Ave, Bernarde!*

It is with the affection of a mother that Mary receives the salutations of the poor, for the sight of them and of their humble dwellings reminds her of Bethlehem and the crib.

She is ever ready to receive the salutations of the sinner whom the world despises, and it is then she is moved by sorrow and compassion, such as she felt at the foot of the cross. The misery of him who appears to be advancing blindfold to eternal ruin is as a sword piercing her heart, and she seems to say:—"Poor sinner! then you still love me and salute me?" and she turns to her Divine Son and begs His mercy for the guilty one.

Whatever our state may be, our salutation is always precious to Mary, for by it we show that we are not ungrateful, and that we preserve in our hearts the remembrance of the benefits which her maternal hand has showered on us. It tells of our love of her, for is it not our love which makes us rejoice that she is so blessed, so great? And our very lowliness and misery add value to our love; for, if a very poor man were to

take such delight in the prosperity and wealth of another as to become forgetful for the time being of his own needy condition, it would certainly be a strong proof of the sincerity of his attachment. This loving salutation of the poor to the rich is that which we offer to the Queen of Heaven.

Mary is so full of tenderness that it is impossible for her to remain unmoved when she sees the children of the Church, throughout the whole length and breadth of the world, all saluting her with devotion, all rejoicing with her in her happiness, all congratulating her on her glory, and all exclaiming in a transport of filial love, *Ave! Salve!* How can she fail to shower down upon those who thus invoke her the treasures of her love, and to obtain for her devoted clients, through her Divine Son, every good grace and perfect gift.

Alas! we too often forget that the worship of praise, which is inspired by love, is the most welcome offering to God and to his saints. We are too selfish in our piety; we speak too much of ourselves in our prayers, and too little of God. Because our love is so weak, we think only of our petitions.

What are the prayers which the saints are offering? Nothing is left for them to desire, therefore, they ask nothing; they praise, they bless, they magnify God. Contemplating Him face to face, they rejoice in his glory and in his infinite perfections, and unceasingly unite with the angels in saying:—"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord," and therein find their eternal bliss.

Should not, therefore, our chief employment here on earth be like unto that of the saints in glory? The Apostle has told us that we should pass our days as those whose heart is already in heaven—*conversatio nostra in cælis*.

Man is created to glorify God in this life and thus to merit eternal blessedness. Consequently, when he

addresses God, he should praise Him before he asks for graces or favours.

Has not Christ taught us this when He instructed his disciples as to the manner in which they should pray?

The first word of the *Pater* is a word of love. "Our Father who art in heaven;" and the first three supplications are wholly expressive of desire for the glory of God.

Hallowed be thy name; may it be known, loved, praised by all the earth.

May thy Kingdom come; so that men may recognise in Thee their king, their God, and lovingly submit to thy will.

May thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; so that all may find their true happiness in thy service.

Oh, how would our hearts expand with the fire of charity, how would they become divested of that egotism and self-love, which spoils all our better qualities, if we made use of this method of prayer when addressing God. Dead to self, and living only in Him and for Him, we should soon see our discouragements, our fears, our sufferings disappear as the clouds.

Let us then not lightly pass over these considerations which are of importance to all who would truly seek and serve God.

We find that amongst the hundred and eleven members of the Society of Jesus, who, as true martyrs to their vocation, were expelled from Brazil and Maragnon and thrown, by the orders of the too-famous Pombal, into the loathsome dungeons of Azeitão in the year 1670, was Father Antony Paès. In the records of his life, a striking instance is given of a conversion due to the love with which the Blessed Virgin regards her erring children. It happened in the early days of the good Father's apostolic work, and made him celebrated throughout Brazil.

One dark and tempestuous night, a negro man, whom Father Paès had never seen before, came to seek his aid for a dying person, and hurried on before him by the most precipitous paths, turning his head only to cry out now and then, "You can go back if you wish." But to save a soul, the priest was ready even to sacrifice his life, and he followed the messenger until they came to a miserable hovel where the negro left him, having thrown open the door. It appeared that the dying man had not asked for the visit; he desired to expire in his impenitence, for from the age of sixteen years he had given himself over to the Evil One. Yet, all through his sinful life he had preserved the custom of saluting an image of the Virgin whenever he passed it, exclaiming *Salve Regina*, and this he did before the Church of St. Francis and that of the Jesuit Fathers, constantly.

He was at last induced to reconcile his soul with God by means of Father Paès' affectionate entreaties, and his life was also given back to him. In after years, when, during his apostolic travels, the good Father accepted the hospitality of a certain Franciscan Convent, a lay-brother came humbly to kiss his hand—it was none other than the man whom the Queen of Heaven had rescued from the power of Satan.

PRAYER.

Mary, my good Mother, from my heart I salute you in union with the archangel, and rejoice that you are exalted to the highest heavens. Blessed are you in your happiness, blessed in your glory. May God be for ever blessed in that He loved you so much and heaped upon you such riches of grace. Dear and tender Mother, beloved of every heart which is capable of feeling, deign to look on me a poor sinner humbly prostrate at your feet, and bless me with the blessing of your immaculate heart.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

SECOND MEDITATION.

MARY IS THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

Salve Regina !
Hail, our Queen !

I.

Mary is Queen.

Salve Regina ! Mary is Queen. It is the Holy Church, her beloved daughter and the Spouse of Christ, which bestows on her this august title. As the Church glorifies the saints because they are the children and the servants of God, so she glorifies Mary as the Mother of God, whose virgin and immaculate brow is enriched by a glorious crown.

In the *Salve*, she bears the simple title of Queen. Elsewhere her kingdom is specified and she is called Queen of Heaven, Queen of Angels, Queen of all the Saints, glorious Queen of the World, and those words of the Psalmist are applied to her as seated on her throne at the right hand of Jesus.—*Adstitit Regina à dextris tuis.* Ps. xliv. 10.

In thus proclaiming the sovereignty of Mary, the Church does no more than add the weight of her authority to the unanimous voice and traditions of the earliest ages ; she is the spring whence the Fathers and the greatest Doctors have drawn their inspiration, an inexhaustible fountain of living waters.

“If the Son born of the Virgin,” says St. Athanasius, “is King, his Mother is truly and by right regarded as our Queen, our Sovereign Lady.” And St. Bernardine, of Siena, writes on this subject : “From the moment when the Virgin consented to her Divine maternity,

she merited the primacy of the universe, dominion over the world, and her queenly sceptre extends over all creatures."

Could she in fact be other than Queen, when she became the mother of the King of kings? This natural consequence is thus further developed by the same saint. "As many as are the creatures who worship the Blessed Trinity, so many also are there who venerate the Blessed Virgin; for all creatures, men and angels, and all that are in heaven or on the earth are subject to the dominion of God."

While, therefore, the hosts of heaven venerate you and bow before your sceptre, oh, great and dear Queen! while your children on earth proclaim your glory with transports of joy, suffer me also, though a poor sinner and your most unworthy child, to exclaim in a transport of filial love, *Salve Regina!* "Hail, our Queen!"

Mary is Queen. The authority of the Church tells me this; the Fathers affirm it; my heart assures me it is so.

But what is the nature of her sovereignty; what is its principle, its foundation? If we search into the very essence of this question, sovereignty in its absolute sense can belong only to God. God is the sole ruler, Lord of all; for all things have been drawn out of nothing by his infinite power, and thus all things fall under his dominion, and are his essential, necessary, absolute, and inalienable property. It follows, therefore, that God's jurisdiction in regard to the human will, is also essential, necessary, absolute, and universal, and that under pain of a criminal revolt against the Divine Majesty, every human will is obliged to recognise and to submit to this supreme dominion of God, not only as regards his interior life, but in every exterior and personal action. This is the sovereignty of God. This is why God calls Himself "The King of kings, and the Ruler of rulers."—1 Tim. vi. 15.

What, then, are our earthly monarchs but the humble dependents of God, wearing only a perishable crown?

II.

The Sovereignty of Jesus Christ and of those who are His members.

Divine, essential, and absolute royalty belong to Christ in his character of Son of God. As Son of man, and by reason of his human nature, there is another sovereignty which, without being essential, belongs to Him by right of conquest and as a Divine gift.

It has been given to Him by his Father, because in saving the world and triumphing over hell, He restored the power and glory of God. Now, this sovereignty, which is his as the conquest of his labours and by the shedding of his blood, He deigns to share in heaven with those who have submitted to his rule here on earth; with those who have toiled and suffered with Him; and in his divine munificence, the reward is more than proportionate to those labours and those sufferings. The members of the mystical body of Christ reign in heaven with Him whom they adore, and thus the promise of the Holy Ghost is finally and perfectly accomplished. "To serve God is to reign with Him." *Cui servire regnare est. (Pontif. Rom. in Ordin. Subd.)*

They were already as rulers upon the earth, but it was after the manner in which Christ was King during his mortal life—kings, by the conquest of their passions and by their victory over the world, the devil, and self. In the eternal, unending life of heaven, their reign is consummated in glory.

What a sublime picture do we thus form of heaven!

The world-renowned Senate of ancient Rome must have presented a gorgeous spectacle, with its three

hundred senators assembled in all the splendour of kings. But far more gorgeous, far more sublime will be the heavenly senate, for there will be gathered millions, who, as kings, shall shine resplendent in divine glory; as many kings as there have been saints, and their radiance will be brighter in proportion as they are nearer to the throne of God.

Oh, moment of ineffable joy! Oh, moment of intoxicating gladness when a soul enters heaven! What a spectacle must present itself, of which we, who are still on earth, can form no conception! "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.—1 Cor. ii. 9.

What, then, are the most powerful of earthly rulers but shadows, as compared with even the lowest of the saints? For kings are but the children of men; the saints are the children of God, the brethren of Jesus Christ, and coheirs of his glory. Their riches and treasures of an earthly king cannot follow him beyond the grave; whereas the saints possess an infinite wealth, of which neither time nor death can ever rob them. Their treasure, their chief good, is God; they see Him, they possess Him, and this for all eternity.

Earthly monarchs must depend upon other rulers, and ally themselves with other kingdoms, and often they can only keep their crown by submission to their own subjects. The saints, on the contrary, enjoy the liberty of the children of God, and are unassailable by their enemies; their every desire is satisfied, and even God's will is theirs, because they can never be in opposition to it. *Voluntatem timentium se faciet.* And this glorious sovereignty belongs to all the saints, increasing in splendour according to the greatness of their merit. *Gloria hæc est omnibus sanctis ejus.*—Ps. cxlix.

III.

The Sovereignty of Mary and that of the Blessed.

Beyond and above, and at an immense distance from the sovereignty of the angels and saints, there exists in heaven—subject to the dominion of God—a sovereignty like no other, and to which all others are secondary—it is that of Mary, the Mother of Christ.

The sovereignty of the saints is that of the servants of God; the sovereignty of Mary is that of her who, in her humility, called herself the handmaid of God: *Ecce ancilla Domini*; yet, who is none the less Mother of God. Christ the Redeemer, is the King of Heaven; Mary is his mother, and upon her beloved head He has placed the diadem of heaven's Queen.

With what delight do we think of her dignity! We glance at the throne of Mary by the aid of imagination, and we are dazzled with her glory! Hail, a thousand times hail, oh, glorious Queen of Heaven! *Salve Regina!*

Descendant of the house of David, Mary was of royal blood, but she was destined to another royalty than that of Juda.

A thousand years before she came into the world, her ancestor, David, by Divine inspiration, had beheld her seated as a Queen at the right hand of Christ, clad in raiment as of sparkling gold and resplendent with beauty. *Adstitit Regina à dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate.*—Ps. xliv. 10. Thus, then, did David behold her. But the beloved disciple of Jesus—he, who on Calvary became the son of Mary—saw her as even more beautiful than this after she had been enthroned in heaven.

“And a great sign,” thus he speaks in the Apocalypse, “appeared in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”—Apoc. xii. 1.

Interpreted in a literal sense, this woman is the

Church. But the Church applies these words in the sense of appropriation to the Blessed Virgin, who is the Mother of the Church, and the nearest to the Head of the Church—Christ; to her who, in her sole person, is more glorious than all the members of the Church united.

Clothed with the sun. What is this sun? It is not the orb which gives us light, for its rays do not penetrate heaven. It is not beautiful enough for that abode of glory.

St. John saw of no other light in heaven but the Lamb of God. “And the Lamb was the light thereof.” Yes! the glory of the very Lamb of God is the sun which serves as a garment to Mary. *Mulier amicta sole.*

The moon was her footstool. The moon is the symbol of all which is varying and changeful; therefore, a symbol of creatures. The Virgin, then, sees all creation at her feet. *Luna sub pedibus ejus.*

And on her head a crown of twelve stars. According to the general teaching of the Fathers and writers of the Church, as Cornelius à Lapide tells us, these stars are the Twelve Apostles who shone around the head—that is, around the beginnings—of the Church. They shone on the head of Mary, the Mother of the Church, then in its infancy. When we consider further, that, according to the general interpretation, the prelates who came after the Apostles were also called stars, and that those who spread abroad the doctrine of Christ, shall, as the Scripture tells us, shine as the stars, who can object to our assertion, that the twelve stars which gleam upon the brow of Mary, and of the Holy Church, represent in the Apostles, as the founders of the Church, the saints universally? Therefore, the Church addresses Mary as “Queen of all Saints,” and asks her to pray for us.

Must we, then, still inquire in what respect the sovereignty of Mary differs from that which is common to all the saints?

What sovereignty in heaven can be compared to that of Mary? 1°. If the saints are crowned with glory

because they became rulers of themselves and of the world, by their courage in the service of God, what must be the glory of her who served God more perfectly than did all the saints united together?

2°. Mary alone was immaculate, even from the moment of her conception.

3°. She unites in herself the glory of each saint in an eminent degree which is her own; she presents a combination of glories which, except by miracle, are incompatible. Thus, she is a virgin—the Virgin of virgins—yet she is also a mother.

4°. The saints were the servants of God, but Mary is the Mother of God.

5°. Consequently, whereas we render to the saints the worship which is called “*dulia*,” we render to Mary alone that which is termed “*hyperdulia*.”*

6°. The angels are her servants, and the saints glory in obeying her. What homage did the great Archangel Gabriel pay to Mary; and did not angels innumerable come down to earth to bear their Queen in triumph to heaven on the day of her Assumption? And how often has the Blessed Virgin appeared, in the company of angels and saints, all eager to execute with reverent love the behests of their Heavenly Queen. Oh, yes! These diadems are all glittering upon the brow of Mary, encircling that double coronet which she alone can wear, and whose brilliancy dazzles the whole Court of Heaven; the double coronet which she wears as Mother of God, and Immaculate Virgin Mother.

Oh! happy he who can thus represent to himself the Blessed Virgin, provided only that he has in his heart at least some feeble flame of love for that good mother!

*Theologians distinguish three forms of worship: the highest form, “*latria*,” is offered only to God, the Supreme Being; and to Jesus Christ, God and man. We reverence Mary, the Mother of God, with the worship called “*hyperdulia*.” The third in dignity is the honour which we pay to the saints and angels, and this last is termed “*dulia*.”

With what delight will he repeat, with eyes raised to heaven, her glorious titles of royalty.

Queen of Angels, pray for us. And we seem to see myriads of celestial beings, from the choirs of angels to those of the cherubim or seraphim, casting their crowns at the feet of the Queen of Heaven, as they cry with a reverence and love we poor denizens of earth cannot feel, "Hail, our Queen!" *Salve Regina!*

Queen of Patriarchs, pray for us. And we picture to ourselves the venerable and holy patriarchs of old, to whom the Messiah was promised, and from whom He was to descend, advancing with the glorious spouse of the Blessed Virgin towards the throne of that Jewish maiden who has been raised to the dignity of Queen of Paradise, and, bowing their heads in reverence, we imagine them addressing her in a rapture of love, "Hail, our Queen!" *Salve Regina!*

Queen of Prophets, pray for us. And all the prophets, those divine oracles of the Holy Ghost, whose predictions were of Jesus and Mary, proclaim aloud to the heavenly Jerusalem, that this is she whom they saw and foretold so many centuries before her birth. Here! here is she who was to bear a Son and yet remain a virgin! Here is the branch which was to spring from the root of Jesse! "Hail, our Queen!" *Salve Regina!*

Queen of Apostles, pray for us. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles and the Vicar of Christ, draws near the throne of Mary, with those who were his brothers in the Apostolate; with the pontiffs, the bishops, the priests who came after them, and, offering their crowns to Mary, proclaim her their Queen. "Hail, our Queen!" *Salve Regina!*

Queen of Martyrs, pray for us. And now myriads of martyrs, glorious in the crimson mantle of their blood, place their palms upon the breast of her who reigns in splendour, yet was once the Queen of Martyrs and the Mother of Sorrows. "Hail, our Queen!" *Salve Regina!*

Queen of Virgins, pray for us. Oh what a pure, what a fair phalanx, all radiant in the splendour of their virginity, advance towards her who was Virgin of virgins, and cover her with their virginal crowns, saying, "Hail, our Queen." *Salve Regina!*

Queen of all the Saints, pray for us. We see all heaven, an immense multitude which no man could number; the poor, the rich, masters and servants; soldiers, labourers, kings; fathers, mothers, and thousands of little children, proclaiming with one heart and voice the sovereignty of her whom all generations have called blessed, "Hail, our Queen." *Salve Regina!*

What a pure and sweet joy for me, could I also unite my voice with the heavenly choir and cry "Hail, our Queen." *Salve Regina!* Alas! it is from afar off and in the midst of this poor world that we salute Mary, but a day will come—yes! by the mercy of God we may anticipate it, when for us also the heavens will open. My God! what happiness will it be to look upon that glorious Queen of Paradise!

Saint Antoninus, speaking of Mary as signifying light, *illuminatrix*, records the following anecdote:

A certain cleric had often desired and earnestly asked of God that he might be permitted to see the Blessed Virgin; and every time that in the Office he sang the praises of Mary his heart became more inflamed by this longing, especially when he saw the words: *Tota pulchra es*.

One day an angel made known to him that if he were allowed to see Mary, he would be so dazzled at her glory that he would lose his sight. "I would willingly become blind," exclaimed the cleric, "if I might but see her." However, he resolved within himself that should this vision be granted, he would gaze with one eye only, closing the other, in order not to be wholly deprived of sight. As he was engaged in prayer, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and he immediately covered one of his eyes with his hand; but becoming

ravished with the contemplation of this beloved Mother, he forgot his precaution and looked at her with both eyes. The apparition vanished and the poor cleric was perfectly blind, but he esteemed his sight well lost for a vision of her who is the joy of Paradise, and neither grieved nor complained after having beheld Mary.

However, as he was forced to gain his livelihood by writing, he prayed to the Blessed Virgin that he might recover the use of one of his eyes. We may imagine the response of the good Mother who always accords more than our petitions; she, who far from depriving her children of sight, illuminates them from the light of her own bright Virgin soul, gave him back his sight, far clearer and stronger than it had ever been. Thus two graces,—two marvels,—were wrought in behalf of this favoured son of Mary.

Let us take courage. Let us continue to despise the miserable seductions of this earth, saying with St. Ignatius: "When I contemplate heaven, how the world inspires me with disgust." *Quam sordet mihi tellus cum cælum aspicio!*

PRAYER.

Mary! good Mother, let me not be so unhappy as to lose, by reason of my sins, the joy of beholding you for all eternity in heaven. Oh! what a terrible misfortune, if for the pleasure of a moment, I forfeit heaven; forfeit for ever the love of so dear a Mother; of Christ, who is more tender and merciful than any father; of God, who is infinitely holy and beautiful; to fall, after a life of shame and remorse, into the abyss of everlasting misery. Mother of Mercy, preserve me from this irremediable, this endless evil. Save me, although by reason of my ingratitude to the good God, I am so unworthy. I ask of you this grace with a firm yet humble confidence, by the Heart of your Divine Son. Amen.

Ave Maria.

THIRD MEDITATION.

THE SECRET OF MARY'S POWER, OR OUR LADY OF THE
SACRED HEART.

Salve Regina!
Hail, our Queen!

Mary exercises a regal power in heaven, for she is Queen of Heaven, Queen of Angels, Queen of all the Saints. But wherein lies the secret of her power?

It lies in her affinity with Jesus, her Son and her God, to whom she owes all, and with whom she can do all. This connexion will form the subject of our meditation to-day. What power has she over the Heart of Jesus? There are two errors to be avoided here; one which would diminish, the other which would tend to exaggerate the power of Mary. As this work concerning the Queen of Heaven is written for the children of the Church, and they, so far from being tempted to lessen the greatness of Mary, have rather to be careful, lest, in their love and by the impulse of an indiscreet zeal, they may form an erroneous idea of a devotion new as to its form, we will give some explanation of the nature of Mary's power over the heart of her Son.

This power could hardly have been better expressed than by the name: *Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*.

We will explain the theological meaning of this new title of Mary by replying to two questions:

1°. What is the origin of the title of "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart?"

2°. What is its meaning?

I.

Origin of the title of "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart."

The destinies of Jesus have been united from all eternity with those of his Blessed Mother, and will for ever remain united. God, in decreeing the Incarnation of his Son, decreed at the same time the creation of his Divine Mother. It was part of one plan, for God had to bestow upon the Mother certain qualities which she was to have to transmit to the sacred humanity of Jesus. Thus, Mary was announced by prophecy conjointly with the Messiah, and her existence was united throughout with the existence of Jesus.

When God promised a Redeemer to fallen man, He united to that promised Saviour the woman who was to be his Mother, and the foot which should crush the head of the serpent may be understood as referring equally to the Mother and to the Son. . *Ipsa* or *Ipse conteret caput tuum*. Mary with her Son was, in fact, to crush the head of the serpent on Calvary.

When the Holy Ghost revealed to Isaias the birth of Christ, a thousand years before it came to pass, the Virgin who was to be his Mother was shown to the prophet. *Ecece Virgo concipiet*.—Isaias, vii. 1.

When the Archangel announced to Mary the Incarnation of the Son of God, he announced at the same time that she was to be the Mother of the Man-God. The Author of all grace was about to descend from the heavens, and already Mary is saluted as full of grace; when Jesus appeared as the Son of Man, Mary appeared as the Mother of God.

Mary is associated with all the sufferings, as she is with all the glories of Jesus. In every instance her lips touched the bitter chalice which was presented to her Son.

When the aged Simeon foretold the Passion of Jesus, he showed the Mother the sword which should pierce her

own heart. When Jesus, suffering all the agony of the crucifixion, sacrificed his sacred body for the salvation of the world, Mary was associated with that sacrifice, and for the salvation of the world immolated her only Son upon the altar of her motherly heart. As Jesus is the King of Sorrows, Mary is the Queen of Martyrs.

Three days after his death, Jesus rose again and came forth glorious from the tomb. Three days after her death, Mary was raised up by Divine power, and angels carried her in triumph to be with her Son in his glory. Jesus sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father; Mary is placed at the right hand of her Son.

Jesus is our only Divine Mediator with his Father. Mary is our mediatrix with her Son. Jesus is the Head of the Church; Mary is the Church's Mother. Jesus is the Father of all mercy; Mary is the Mother of Mercy and Refuge of Sinners.

Thus, by a natural analogy, we arrive at the reason which has caused Mary to be called by the title of *Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*. She was associated in all circumstances with her Divine Son, and it was, therefore, fitting that she should have her place in the public revelation of the Heart of Jesus. For, is not this revelation one of the most touching, one of the most powerful means destined to sanctify and to save souls? Jesus reveals to a sin-sick world a heart burning with love and overflowing with sorrow. Is it matter for surprise that, at the moment when devotion to the Heart of Jesus has received its fullest development by the apostleship of the Sacred Heart, the piety of the faithful should discern a new relation between Christ and his blessed mother: that is to say, the influence of Mary upon the Divine Heart? Is it not for Mary to lead the sinning, suffering world nearer to the Adorable Heart of her Son?

This is why this most blessed Mother, who cannot be separated from the God-Saviour, has received a new title

connected with the Heart of Jesus as revealed to men—the title of *Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*. Thus, once more the world must know that, by God's will (as St. Bernard says), all grace is to come to us through Mary, even that which flows from the Heart of Jesus, whose Mother she is. *Totum nos habere voluit per Mariam.*

II.

Meaning of the Title, "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart."

To unfold the meaning of this glorious title will be to define the relations of Mary with Jesus, and to declare in what her influence, as his Mother, over her Divine Son, consists.

Mary is not the Queen, nor the Sovereign of the Heart of Jesus. Great though she is, and Mother of God, she is only a creature, and, consequently, subject to God.

When we study Mary in connexion with her Divine Son, who is God, we recognise that she is placed in an essential, absolute, universal dependence with regard to her Lord and her God. The rights of God being essential, necessary, and inalienable, Mary can possess no essential power over her Divine Son; nor can this Son forego his prerogatives concerning her, for she is a creature and He is Creator: He is God and she is not God. Even while in thought we attribute indefinite glory to Mary, she remains a creature, and, therefore, finite; infinity must always lie between her and an Infinite God, who made Himself Man.

Thus, the Church does not allow us to call Mary the Sovereign Lady of the Heart of Jesus; but we are permitted to call her *Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*, that is our Queen, or our Lady—and yet considered in her relation with the Heart of Jesus. *Domina nostra à sanctissimo Corde Jesu dicta.*

Without doubt the Blessed Virgin, as the Mother of Jesus, enjoys a connexion with the Heart of her Son which is possible with no other creature; and she exercises an influence over this Adorable Heart such as none but herself could possess. But, no more than any other creature, can she have any *rights*, any superiority whatever, over a God made Man, even though according to the flesh He was born of her.

The question of right and authority being once for all clearly determined, we need not entertain any fear of exaggerating the power of Mary over the Heart of Jesus. She owes this power to her Son; and Christ showed his Blessed Mother, on two occasions on which He acceded to her request, that He is independent of her, because He is the Son of God.

It was by the desire of his Mother that Christ worked the first miracle, but delaying momentarily its execution He said to her, to signify that He was God: "Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come."—John, ii. 4.

Again—when, at Jerusalem, Mary explained to her Son how greatly He had afflicted her in his absence from herself and St. Joseph during three days, Christ replied: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"—Luke, ii. 49.

Does this imply that Mary cannot do all that she wills with the Heart of Jesus? By no means. It only implies that her power is not a *right*, but a voluntary gift, vouchsafed by this very Heart of Jesus. It is certain that this power is so great that Mary can obtain everything from her Son, just as if she possessed maternal rights over Him; for Jesus never did and never will refuse anything to his Mother.

Mary, then, as the saints affirm, is all-powerful with the Heart of Jesus; but her power is dependent, and that of a suppliant. *Omnipotentia supplex.*

It is only in this sense that St. Bernardine has ventured

to say—while showing on the one hand her absolute dependence and on the other her absolute power—
 “According to Ecclesiasticus, Mary’s sceptre extends over all nations: *In omni gente et populo primatum habui*.*
 Let us go further and say, if such an expression may be permitted us, that she is not only the sovereign established over all creatures, but of the Creator Himself: *Facta est Domina ipsius Creatoris*.† Like all other created beings, Mary is subject to God, but God in his turn becomes submissive to Mary: *Beatæ Virgini subditus est Deus*.”‡—Vol. II., Sermon. lxi.

III.

The Reason of Mary’s Power over the Heart of Jesus.

It remains for us to examine into the reasons why this power over the Heart of Jesus has been given to Mary.

The first reason is, that she is the Mother of Christ.

The second reason is, that she has won the Heart of Jesus.

First. She is Mother of Jesus. Jesus, being God, was in nowise obliged to yield obedience to his Mother; but it was his will to show us by his example how we should respect the fourth commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother.” The first thirty years of his life on earth were passed in obedience to Mary and his foster-father, St. Joseph. “And He was subject unto them.”—John, ii. 51. Thus, St. Germanus of Constantinople addresses Mary, saying: *Tu autem materna in Deum auctoritate polles*.§

This very real authority which Christ gave to Mary

* In every nation, and in every people, I held the chief power.

† She was made the ruler of the Creator Himself.

‡ God was subject to the Blessed Virgin.

§ But thou possessest a mother’s authority over God.

during his mortal life—this authority which He respected and obeyed—cannot be hers now that He reigns in glory ; but it does not necessarily follow that Mary possesses less influence with her Divine Son in heaven than she had upon earth. Jesus has been lavishing glory upon his Mother ever since the day of her Assumption : has He not, then, augmented the glory of her maternal influence ?

“ In this world,” writes Mgr. Plantier, “ the august Virgin had authority over her Adorable Son ; in heaven she only praises Him and prays to Him. But her intercession is not less powerful than her authority, and the name of ‘ Our Lady of the Sacred Heart,’ consecrates this sweet conviction of the Church.”

Mary will for all eternity be the Mother of Jesus, and Jesus will never withdraw anything from her influence, for He does not repent of his gifts (as St. Augustine tells us), for that influence was only bestowed on her in order that his mercy might be more and ever more shown to us, and that the arm of his justice might be withheld from striking us.

Secondly.—Mary has won the Heart of Jesus, and made herself its sovereign by her love. Here a beautiful field for thought opens out before our view. It is now that we perceive the beauty and glory of the name, *Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*. Just as Jesus in showing us his Heart reveals to us all that is most delicate and tender in his love, so the title of *Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*, reveals all that is most delicate, most gracious, most glorious, in Mary’s power with her Divine Son.

All the favours, all the graces which Christ pours out upon us are the effects of his love. The centre the seat, the throne, of this divine love is the Heart of Jesus. The Heart of Jesus is the stronghold of power, and Mary, in a certain sense, has become mistress of it. Just as God does not choose to possess our

hearts by his right as a Creator, but wills rather to win them by his goodness, so is Mary not content with the power Jesus gave her over his Heart as his Mother, but has conquered that sacred Heart, by the sweet force of her love, and has made it yield itself eternally her captive. And what means has she employed for this glorious conquest? None, save the darts of her love. She has so loved this Divine Heart, she has so sacrificed herself for it, she has wounded it so deeply, so victoriously by the arrow of her virginal and maternal love that, vanquished for ever, it says: *Vulnerasti cor meum, vulnerasti cor meum*—Cant. iv. 9.*

Oh, divine victory! Oh, glorious triumph! the triumph of love, which, without taking away the rights of the vanquished, overcomes by force of most tender love. It is Jesus who raises his blessed Mother, and placing in her hands a sceptre, gives her power over his Sacred Heart—the power of love; and Mary rises, leaning on her Beloved, reigning with Him, and triumphing by the charms of her love. *Quæ est ista quæ ascendit de deserto, innixa super dilectum?*—Cant. viii. 5.† It is Our Lady of the Sacred Heart! How dear should Mary be by this title to all who love the Heart of Jesus, and with how great a confidence should such a title inspire us?

Let us recall the great and numerous promises which Christ made to those who shall be devout to his Sacred Heart. “Why cannot I tell,” says the Blessed Margaret Mary, “all that I know respecting this sweet devotion to the Heart of Jesus, and make known to all the world the treasures of grace enclosed within this Adorable Heart, to be poured out on all who practise it!”

* Thou hast wounded my heart, thou hast wounded my heart.

† Who is she who goeth up from the desert leaning on her beloved?

There is no surer method of reaching this Divine Heart than through her who has won it, and knows how it may be approached—Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

Has not Jesus given the key of his Heart to his Mother, because she is our Mother also? It is his wish that Mary shall draw for us from out of that Heart its infinite treasures, and that she may do this with the prodigal tenderness of the heart of a mother, who, because she cannot help loving, cannot fix a measure to her gifts.

Our own hands are too deeply tainted; it is the pure, the virgin, the loving hand of Mary, which must draw forth the divine treasure; she can never draw upon it too much, nor fathom the abyss of Christ's love for her, or of his mercy towards us.

Nor will Mary ever refuse to have recourse to this fount of love when appealed to by the poor souls whom she brought forth as her children at the foot of the cross, and who cost her so many tears, such anguish, nay, even the very life-blood of her Divine Son.

When, therefore, we invoke Mary by her title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, we wound her sweetly in the most sensitive part of her heart, for thus we recall to her the love which ever has burned and ever will burn for her in the Heart of Jesus, and we remind her of the love with which she herself is consumed for the most loving of Hearts; we remind her of the sweet and glorious power which her Son has given her over his Adorable Heart.

It is easy then to understand why the devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart should be made use of in so many difficult and apparently hopeless cases.

Invoking Mary by this title, we seem to say: "The grace we ask of you lies within the Heart of Jesus. That Heart you have won; your love renders you its sovereign. We are sure of this, and if you do not assist us, it is because you will not, since we know

that the Heart of Jesus is at your disposal. Good Virgin, is it possible, that you, our Mother, are able to help us, and yet will not? If so, it would be for the first time. No! you will not, you cannot, refuse one who implores you in the name of the Heart of Jesus."

Among the French soldiers sent to Rome, in the year 1848, for the defence of the Pope, there was a young man named Augustin , whose life was given up to every kind of scandalous excess. Happening to hear that the Superior of the Dominican Convent there come from his part of the country, and had been a companion of his childhood, he took an opportunity of going to pay him a visit.

The Superior was just going out as the soldier arrived, and after greeting him cordially invited him to accompany him. The soldier was somewhat ashamed to traverse the streets of Rome in his uniform, by the side of the Dominican in his white habit, but he yielded politely with a good grace.

They talked awhile of old days and memories of their childhood, and then the father seized the moment he thought opportune and said "Well, and how has it been with you since your First Communion?"

The soldier looked disconcerted, and stammered some excuse, but forcing himself to a semblance of indifference, cried, "My First Communion, Father? Oh that is a very old story. It is a long while since I thought of that. I have other things to do."

"Other things? Well, what are they?"

"Oh—to amuse myself, of course, and pass life as merrily as I can."

"Poor youth," said the Dominican, turning on his companion a look of compassion. "You can amuse yourself then? and what about losing your soul? and what about hell, which is awaiting you?"

These words fell like a thunderbolt on the soldier's ear; his face darkened, and in a tone of irritation he

answered: "Suppose we talk of something else, Father. You will only give yourself useless trouble, for I am not at all inclined to continue that subject."

"As you will," said the priest, "but as you sow you must reap. I shall pray that God may open your eyes." They had just reached the Convent of the Trinità-dei-Monti, and passing within the corridor, the Dominican begged his friend to wait for him a moment, while he said a few words to the Superior. Upon the wall there is a miraculous picture, painted in fresco, and representing the Blessed Virgin, at the age of thirteen years, seated in the enclosure of the Temple and engaged in spinning. The picture goes by the name of *Mater Admirabilis*.

The soldier having nothing else to do, began to examine the painting as he waited. "A droll idea," said he to himself, "the Virgin spinning!" and he looked at it more closely. Ah! that sweet Mother was looking with mercy upon the sinner, and turning from him to her Divine Son.

The Dominican Father came back, but could not see his companion; a sigh revealed him prostrate and weeping near the painting, but partly concealed by the angle of the wall. Like a second Augustine, he wept over his sins, and then rising, raised his eyes and hands to heaven with rapture, as one who beheld some marvellous sight. "Ah, Father!" he cried, returning to a consciousness of where he was, "let me make my confession at once, I am alarmed at the state of my conscience, this picture has disconcerted me. I have heard not a word, but my heart is rent asunder."

Five minutes more and our soldier was a changed man; from that day he became a model to his regiment, and at the end of his service he entered the Order of St. Dominic, and became one of its missionaries in the East.

Oh good, oh sweet Virgin ! She is, she will ever be the same. Admirable Mother, Mother of Mercy, beloved of earth and of heaven !

PRAYER.

Oh ! Blessed Virgin Mary ! Oh ! happy Mother ! who has such power with the Heart of your Divine Son ; I abandon myself wholly to your keeping, I put my life, my death, my eternity into your hands. You know, oh, Lady of the Sacred Heart, how much I am in need of your protection ; do not refuse it to me ! As Jesus has given you power over his Divine Heart, let some of the rays of light which proceed from that source of light and love fall upon me. Pour into my poor soul some of those graces which abound in that ocean of infinite mercy. Hide me within the wound of the Adorable Heart of Jesus, so that there I may find a refuge from my enemies, and remain ever faithful to my God. Amen.

Ave Maria.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

“MARY, QUEEN OF THE WORLD.”

It is the Holy Church that gives to Mary the title of “Queen of the World.” *Beata Mater et intacta Virgo, gloriosa Regina Mundi, intercede pro nobis ad Dominum.*

I.

Mary derives her sovereignty from Jesus.

It is not from the Church, nor from angels or saints that Mary derives her sovereignty. She holds it from her Divine Son, and exercises it conjointly with Him.

Jesus in the arms of Mary, is wearing a crown which only God can wear ; but He places on his Mother’s brow a royal coronet, and the imperial crown of the world.

The sovereignty of Jesus, the Saviour of the world, and that of Mary, have always been, and will always be, connected one with the other. As Jesus was predestined from all eternity to be the immortal King of ages, so in no lesser degree was she, who was to become his mother, predestined to be the Queen of the world, and in this manner Mary formed upon the type of her Son, Jesus, was eternally present to the august Trinity in the Divine plan.

From all eternity the Word of God saw his Mother before Him. He called her by her name, and gave her the sceptre of the world. This world, which He purposed to call into existence out of nothing, was made for her more than for the rest of mankind. The universe is, of course, the work of the Three Divine Persons, since the act of the Creative Will, being identified with the Divine Nature, belongs equally to all the

Adorable Trinity. But as the Father communicates his own nature in begetting the Word, his Son, so the act of the Will which has given being to everything that exists, emanating from the Father, has been communicated to the Son, and by the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost. And, just as the Word is the uncreated, perfect, consubstantial image of the Father, and the "brightness of his glory," *splendor gloriæ, et figura substantiæ ejus* (Heb. i. 3); even so, the world is the created, imperfect, separate image of the Father and the Son. This is why Holy Scripture tells us that the Father made all things by his Word; *omnia per ipsum facta sunt*.—St. John, i. 3. This is why the Fathers of the Church, and especially those of the first three centuries, represent the Son as executing the orders of his Father in the creation of the universe; this, in brief, is why the act of creation though common to the Three Divine Persons, is especially attributed to the Word.

Now, the Word in creating the universe, had ever present before his mind his Blessed Mother, preparing a kingdom for her and doing all things for her. "For her," says St. Bernard, "the whole world was created." *Propter hanc totus mundus factus est.*

The Holy Church also refers to Mary, in an applied sense, the words of Solomon: "When God laid the foundations of the world, I was with Him,"—Prov. viii. 29. And the Septuagint version adds these words: "It was in me that he rejoiced." *Ego eram cui adgaudebat.*

What a holy joy was that with which the Son of God prepared a world for her who was to be his Mother, employing the marvels of his creative wisdom and power in the furtherance of his plan of love! As the eternal wisdom brought each creature out of nothing, it rejoiced because of Mary, as if saying in its love: "I am for you, oh my Mother, for you will be Queen of the World."

When the Son of God created the sun He rejoiced, for this brilliant orb was to be the dazzling emblem of the royal and heavenly vesture of his Mother, *Mulier amicta sole*. "The woman clothed with the sun."

The moon shone in the firmament, and He rejoiced, for the moon was to be a footstool for her feet. *Luna sub pedibus ejus*. "The moon under her feet."

At the sight of the stars glittering in the skies He rejoiced, for they were to be the aureola and the coronet of the Queen of heaven.

In creating the cedars, the olive trees, the palms, He rejoiced, for these were to be symbols of Mary's incomparable virtues, and were to recall to all ages the thought of the integrity of her sinless body, the sublimity of her mind, the gentleness of her heart, the glory of her triumphs, and the assurance of her protection to all those who seek her aid.

In giving existence to the fountains, the streamlets, and the rivers, He rejoiced; for like them, Mary was to be an abundant source of blessings to men.

In a word, every creature drawn from nothing became a joy to the Divine Wisdom, for it would help to extend and enrich Mary's empire. We know that the world was made for man, but it was in a higher sense made for the immaculate and peerless Virgin, for the Mother of God: for she was dearer to the Word of God than all the angels and saints together.

You, Oh glorious St. Bernard! you understood this—you who were the intimate confidant of the grandeur and charms of Mary—when you cried *Propter hanc, propter hanc, totus mundus factus est*.*

Hitherto we have spoken only of the sovereignty of Mary according to the natural order. But when we come to consider the supernatural order of the Redemption, what a marvel of love was that with which the

* For her, for her, was the whole world made.

Son of God prepared for his Mother the crown of the Queen of Men.

If Jesus rejoiced that He should vanquish the serpent from hell, it was above all because He was to preserve his Mother from the stain of original sin.

If was for her He rejoiced in triumphing over the tyranny of sin, for thus He would secure her from its assaults.

For her, He rejoiced in extinguishing the sting of the flesh, for thus He would keep his Mother for ever spotless.

For her He joyed in his resurrection, for He would seek then her embrace in his glorified form.

For her He joyed in his ascension into heaven, for then He would prepare a throne for his Mother higher than the Seraphim.

When Mary appeared in the world she appeared as a queen, for what other queen could have supported the weight of the crown of the world?

She alone was preserved by her Immaculate Conception from the bondage of Satan.

She alone was free and worthy to reign; all the rest of the human race had fallen, and were bowed down beneath the yoke of the devil. The angel told Mary that she had found grace in God's sight: *Invenisti gratiam apud Deum*; he saluted her as "full of grace." *Ave, gratia plena.*

Not for herself alone was she filled with grace; a Queen, she was to communicate that grace to us all, in giving us Jesus in whom is all grace, and every blessing. *Et benedictus fructus ventris tui.* Through Jesus she was to give life to God's children, and to become the Mother of us all; for who so much as the mother is the child's natural queen?

II.

The nature of Mary's Sovereignty.

What is the nature of the sovereignty of Mary ?

She is the most perfect created image of the sovereignty of Christ. Jesus, when He proclaimed to Pilate that He was King, declared at the same time that his kingdom was not of this world. *Regnum meum non est de hoc mundo.*—St. John, xviii. 36. He possessed none of those things which earthly monarchs ambition, He had neither riches, honours, nor ease.

For Him to be a King was to bring to men the truth which was to give them light; it was to give his life for their salvation. The sign of his principality is the cross, which He bore on his shoulders before expiring thereon. *Principatus ejus super humerum ejus.*—Is. ix. 6. “The government is upon his shoulder.”

This is true greatness, and such was necessary to a God-King in his scheme of lavish generosity. If we could for but one moment suppose Jesus Christ to have harboured esteem and desire for earthly possessions, earthly honours, or earthly delights, we should at once cease to consider Him as our God, He would be in our eyes a human being like the rest of mankind.

What a light this throws upon the vanity and nothingness of anything that men seek after so eagerly here below! For them the truth is not clear and shining; they are not the children of light, and for this reason they close their ears to the voice of Jesus. The saints, who are the children of light and truth, understand the example and hearken to the Word of God made Man; these know that in the true kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, they are rich who divest themselves of all; that they are exalted who humble them-

selves ; that they rejoice who suffer with Christ ; that they who renounce themselves are the truly free ; they become kings in serving God. *Cui servire regnare est.*

This is the wonderful mystery of the cross, which means self-abandonment, ignominy, and suffering. The cross upon the shoulders of Jesus is the sign of his kingdom, but the cross will also be for Him and for all the elect the source of eternal glory—even of true glory in this world.

The Apostle makes this clear to us, when he says of Christ: *Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis ; propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum et donavit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen, ut in nomine Jesu omne genu flectatur, celestium, terrestrium et infernorum.*—"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross . . . For which cause God hath exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above all names, ; that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth."—Phil. ii. 8. The mystery of the cross ! How few understand it ! and how few are truly free ! the greater part of mankind wear the chains that mark the slave.

Now we are beginning to understand the nature of Mary's sovereignty. Mary, as the faithful likeness of Jesus, had no other royalty in this world than that which belongs to grace and to truth, her greatness had in it nothing save what was supernatural and divine. She cared not for the things which earthly kings seek after ; nay, she despised them : always poor and destitute of all glory in the eyes of worldlings, she was, next to Jesus, the most humble, the most lowly of all in Judea, and desired nothing better than to remain in her obscurity. Like Jesus, she thus trod the path of true glory, and now reigns with Him in the highest heaven.

She reigns in heaven ; but she also reigns upon

earth. Jesus, before ascending to his Father, said : *Ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus usque ad consummationem sæculi*. "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—Matt. xxiii. 20.

Is not also Mary, in a certain sense, ceaselessly present with us on earth ? Does she not care for all that concerns the Church and her children ? Is it not she, who, as the Church affirms, has crushed every heresy ?

Did she not, when importuned by the faithful, put an end to the invasions of the savage and indomitable followers of Mahomet, and, by saving Europe, acquire the new title of *Auxilium Christianorum* ? Was it not she who, upon two occasions, when all seemed lost, broke the chains of the holy Pontiff, Pius VII., after he had invoked her aid ?

Was it not in remembrance of this miraculous intervention that the same much-tried Pontiff crowned the virgin's statue at Savona, consecrating it under the title of "Our Lady of Mercy." And has the blessed and immaculate Virgin said her last word concerning the present invasion of the Eternal City, and of the States of the Church ?

Everywhere—in the Church, in Governments, in families, in countless sanctuaries—Mary makes her maternal presence and her royal power felt. And how many are the altars raised in different countries to her whom we call "Our Lady"—that beautiful, most true, most amiable title of our august and beloved Queen ! She is kindness, made manifest in a Mother and Queen. Ah, Blessed Virgin, would that we knew you truly ! would that we understood more fully, that you are our great, our powerful, our dearest Queen—a Queen of boundless goodness, mercy, and love : then indeed we should love you as we ought.

PRAYER.

Mary, most august and dear Queen! you are in heaven, and yet ever present with us on earth, to save sinners, to comfort the sorrowful, and to shower blessings on your children. When I pray, I feel that your eyes, that your heart cannot be far away, and thus, by a lively faith and love, I venerate you as much as if you showed yourself to me. I salute you, dear Queen of heaven and earth; I salute you with a filial love, and a boundless confidence; for you are ruler over all empires and over all hearts. *Salve, Regina!* I beseech you, look upon me with the eyes of a mother, and bless me. Hail, my Queen!

Ave Maria.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

MARY IS THE TERROR OF HELL.

Salve Regina ! Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.

“Hail, our Queen. Terrible as an army set in array.”

Cant. vi. 9.

I.

Mary vanquishes the powers of evil.

Mary is Queen of heaven and of earth, but even this is not the sum of her empire or her glory. As at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, even of those in hell, so even in hell shall all submit to Mary's sceptre; nay, the very mention of her name suffices to spread terror in that dark abyss.

But as Jesus does not call himself the King of hell, so we must not give to the Blessed Virgin the title of its Queen. There only is sovereignty where there is order to be maintained or benefits to be granted. Hell is the abode of ceaseless suffering; eternal disorder and eternal torment have made it their abiding place. *Ubi nullus ordo sed sempiternus horror inhabitat.*—Job x. 22.

Those two most beautiful prerogatives of royalty, and which so pre-eminently distinguish Mary's sovereignty—generosity and clemency—could never be exercised in that accursed gulf, where there is nothing but terror, the anguish of remorse, acutest suffering, and hopeless hatred, for all eternity.

Let us say then that our Queen is the terror of hell, the terror of devils, the terror of the reprobate, the terror also of the wicked, who, persisting in living in this world as reprobates, make themselves the tools of the lost angels, in order to destroy the Kingdom of God in the souls of men.

Mary will for ever be the implacable enemy of Satan, because Satan is the enemy of God, and of the souls of men.

And though Mary with Jesus has bruised the head of the serpent, that cruel enemy lives still, and his defeat has only served to increase his hatred and intensify his rage against those who are the children of God and the children of Mary. The love which our Blessed Lady entertains towards us enkindles within her heart the flame which gives ardour to the warrior, and is as a weapon with which she arms herself to combat in our defence.

She is the new Judith, the Virgin warrior, the Virgin ever triumphant.

What admirable contrasts does her character present! None could be more meek, more amiable, more loving than Mary Immaculate; and yet when God announced her coming for the first time in the terrestrial paradise, He presented her under the figure of a Virgin who was to be invincible. *Ipsa conteret caput tuum.*—Gen. iii. 15.

II.

Mary gives to the Church her power over hell.

When Mary made her entry into the world, the angels recognised her by her spotless beauty and by her valiant bravery. Ravished in beholding on the one hand the splendour of the Virgin of virgins, that divine glory which covered her as with a vesture, and the goodness which overflowed her heart, they saw on the other hand an indomitable and warrior-like courage, which spread terror and death amidst the ranks of God's enemies. Hence they sang: "Who is this that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?"—Cant. vi. 9.

What indeed could be more capable of entrancing both heaven and earth than the sight of the Virgin? Upon her brow shines an ineffable purity, her eyes are bright with angelic sweetness and gleam with a seraphic flame of love; she seems, as she soars heavenwards, to touch the earth with but one of her feet, and yet, without any effort, this foot crushes the infernal serpent which had so long terrified and ravaged the world.

Ah! what confusion to the pride of Lucifer to see his head crushed by a woman!

After this it is easy to understand the hatred which heresy, the offspring of hell, entertains in regard to the august Virgin. Heresy is a revolt against God. The fallen angels were the first rebels, and the Fathers tell us that they became such when the greatness of humanity through the future Incarnation of the Word was revealed to heaven by the Almighty, together with the dignity of the Virgin destined to be the Mother of God made Man. Thus Lucifer, in his rage against Christ and his holy Mother, imposes on all who join in his rebellion the denial of Mary's prerogatives, and forbids devotion to her; for not only does he hate her as the Mother of Christ, but he fears her; her name suffices to make him tremble, and he knows that our invocation of her will avail to disarm hell.

It is a striking fact that, since the time when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed, Lucifer, as the head of all secret societies, has let loose the fury of his infernal power against the Church.

Still, although for a time we are suffering from one of the most treacherous and terrible persecutions which the Church has had to pass through, this in itself is the most certain pledge of our hope. The Queen of Victories will triumph, and the first rays of coming day have shone already at Lourdes, when Mary said: "I am the Immaculate Conception."

III.

Mary causes those who serve her to triumph over hell.

Mary is not contented with only protecting the Holy Church against the powers of darkness, she takes under her care every child of the Church, and gives to each one who appeals to her a complete victory over the assaults of hell. "You who are tossed and tried by the storms and tempests upon this earthly sea, so fruitful in shipwrecks," writes St. Bernard, "fix your eyes on her who calls herself the 'Star of the Sea,' if you would not be submerged beneath the floods. Should the winds of temptation be loosened against you, should you feel yourself ready to founder upon the rock of tribulation, look at the Star of the Sea, look at Mary! If you feel yourself carried away by the waves of pride, of ambition, of detraction, of envy, look at the Star, implore Mary's aid. If anger, if avarice, if impurity threaten to overturn the barque of your soul and engulf it in the abyss, look without delay at the Star,—at Mary! If pressed down by the enormity of your sins, if shame overflows your soul, if the thought of the judgment which awaits you fills you with alarm, if you are in danger of falling into despair, think of Mary! In your peril, in your anguish, in your alarms remember Mary, invoke Mary! Never let her name be far from your lips, nor quit your heart. As long as you follow her you cannot stray; as long as you pray to her you cannot despair; while you think of her you cannot lose the right road. If she holds you up, it is impossible you should fall; if she protects you, you can have nothing to fear; if she is your guide you will feel no weariness, and under her auspices you will arrive safely at your journey's end."—Hom. ii. *Super Missus.*

Who amongst us does not know and frequently repeat that prayer of St. Bernard to which so many sin-

ners have owed their salvation ? “ Remember, oh most holy Virgin Mary, that no one ever had recourse to thy protection or sought thy aid without gaining relief.”

Oh, this loving Virgin, this most beloved Mother is too good to close her ears and her heart to the tried soul which invokes her assistance, or to the poor sinner whom hell may swallow up at any instant, yet who, on the very brink of eternal misery, cries to her for help. She is too truly a mother to see her child in danger from the assaults of Satan, and not come to his assistance when he calls upon her. Like God, she permits the struggle and the combat ; but only that the victory may be more glorious.

The devil knows this, and this is why he employs all his weapons to hinder men from the thought of invoking Mary. Alas ! he succeeds but too often. Sometimes it is because there is neither the spirit, the habit, nor even the thought of prayer, within the soul ; sometimes because prayer is deemed useless, and the excuse is that if made it would not come from the heart : just as if the condition of temptation did not consist in the feeling of indifference regarding holy things, and the eager passion for earthly pleasures !

When prayer comes from the lips, the *will* prays, and that is sufficient.

When once the name of Mary has been invoked, the devil will feel that foot crushing anew his head, that foot of which he has so great a fear, and which is the dread of hell, because it is always victorious.

God once permitted the innocent and holy soul of St. Francis of Sales to be assailed by the devil and become the victim of a most terrible temptation to despair. He was at that time a youth of seventeen years old, and he became possessed of the conviction that his eternal damnation was assured. What a hell upon earth must this have been to one who sought and who loved God alone ! Under pressure of his mental anguish, he wasted away

visibly, and in six weeks had lost all the bloom and strength of youth. He could scarcely eat, drink, or sleep, and when he prayed the heavens seemed as brass. He was to all appearance fast sinking into the grave. Tried beyond endurance and in an extremity of suffering, he one day entered the Church of St. Stephen on his way home from college, and there threw himself at the feet of a statue of the Blessed Virgin which was held in special veneration. Prostrated thus before the Comforter of the Afflicted, he poured out his heart in some such words as these: "O Mary, my Mother, it is true then that I shall dwell for all eternity with the damned, and in hell I can never love God! Still, if I am so unhappy as to be unable to love Him in eternity, let me at least love Him to my latest breath with all my soul and strength." Good God! what a prayer! what strength of love was this, and how powerfully the tempter can deceive! He believed himself damned, heroic saint: and did not notice that the love of the greatest of the martyrs was burning within his heart. Needless is it to ask if Mary's heart was softened when she heard such a petition issuing from the lips of her beloved child, or if she put to instant flight the Evil One!

Francis had made an act of heroic love, and had thus gained the glorious victory which Mary had foreseen when she left him awhile abandoned to the power of temptation. Even as he cried to her, she caused a ray of hope to enter his heart, and seizing the tablet on which the *Memorare* was written for the use of the faithful, he began to recite it, shedding many tears. Scarcely had he finished, than a most sweet peace took possession of his heart, his health was restored, and never more did any cloud obscure the bright heaven of his soul, for the sun of Divine love shone within it with a sweeter light than ever before.

IV.

Mary delivers sinners from the power of the devil.

Mary graciously comes to the help of her faithful children in their sorrows, and tenderly draws near to succour the poor sinners of whom she is the refuge.

Like her ancestor, David, she knows how to snatch from the hellish lion's mouth the wandering sheep which he is about to carry off to his fiery hiding-place.

A great sinner, the slave of Satan, came one day to St. Bernard, and, overwhelmed with remorse, declared with many tears that he had forfeited God's grace by the multitude and the enormity of his transgressions, and that he despaired of ever regaining it. "My son," said the saint, "you must never despair. If you fear that you cannot regain God's grace, you must hope that Mary will obtain it for you. Is it for nothing that she is called, *full of grace*?" Thereupon St. Bernard opened the Gospels and pointed not the words of Gabriel the Archangel: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God." "Do you understand those words, my son?" he continued. "The angel does not say that Mary found that which she had never lost, for she was full of grace; he says she has found grace. When one has oneself lost nothing, it is still possible to find that which has been lost by others. Well, my son, the grace which you have lost by your sins, Mary has found for you. Rise up and go to the Mother of God, throw yourself at her feet and say to her: 'Mother of Divine grace! cast one compassionate glance upon the sinner now before you. I have lost grace, but you have found it. Oh, Mother, restore that grace to me, reconcile me with your Divine Son, and help me never to offend Him any more.'"

It was indeed so. The kind Virgin had found the grace lost by this poor sinner; for, hardly had he, in obedience to St. Bernard, thrown himself at the feet of

Mary than he was filled with a contrition which found vent in abundant tears. Moved by a profound repentance he made a good confession, obtained the joy and peace which belongs to God's children, and persevered so well that he never again lost the grace which he had recovered through Mary.

PRAYER.

Thus it is, oh, good Mother ! that you are the terror of hell. You are dreadful in the sight of Satan, because he is the enemy of God and our enemy ; because you love God and also love us.

You prevent the Evil One from ruining the souls of those who invoke you, and you snatch from his grasp those which he has already seized. Oh, good and powerful Queen, our Lady of Victories ! I salute you with love, and abandon myself to your care. Defend me for ever against the enemies of my soul, combat them for me, especially at the hour of my death, and save me.

Ave Maria.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

MARY, MOTHER OF MERCY.

Salve Regina! Mater Misericordiæ.

“Hail, our Queen! Mother of Mercy.”

I.*The glories and charms of the title of Mother of Mercy.*

We have proved Mary to be the Queen of the world, but we are compelled to place some restrictions on her sovereignty. We need not fear, however, that her crown will lose any of its lustre; on the contrary, it will appear all the more beautiful. Royalty derives its splendour from the greatness, the generosity, and the clemency of its possessor; but, besides these qualities, there must be justice also—a justice which will avenge all attempts against its authority, and will punish the violation and infraction of laws made for the public welfare.

In God, the King of kings—in God, the Infinite Being—every perfection is in itself God; therefore, his justice is as admirable as his goodness. It is not so with earthly monarchs. They may make themselves beloved for their goodness, but, by their administration of justice, they also often make themselves objects of terror; so that it seems as if the exercise of justice were detrimental to the quality of mercy. Justice however, is not the attribute of the sovereignty of Mary. This loving queen has no court of punishment, no tribunal, no prison to affright us with. God has given her the crown and sceptre, but He has

not placed a sword in her maternal hands. She is a Queen, but a Queen overflowing with tenderness, because she is the Mother of Mercy. Is there any sovereignty resembling hers? We have indeed in Mary the rose without thorns. "Hail, our Queen, Mother of Mercy!"

If you read all the books that come into your hands never will you find a name like this! Search for months and years if you will, but I defy you to discover a title so great, so beautiful, so mild, so sweet, as that given by the Church when she calls Mary "Mother of Mercy." Examine separately the two words, *mother* and *mercy*, and then in union with the Holy Church apply them to her who is Queen of heaven and earth, and you will find the most tender, most sweet method God could have chosen, always excepting devotion to the Heart of Jesus, of attracting and inflaming all hearts. While we thus think of our most dear Mother, we feel our hearts are enraptured by her who knows how to charm the hearts of all. Mary is *mother*; Mary is *mercy*. When the human heart becomes debased and degraded by vice, there remain two sentiments which are scarcely ever extinguished. The first is that which is awakened by the name of mother. What heart, unless indeed it be that of a monster of ingratitude, does not preserve some feeling of love for a mother?

The second is that which is inspired by Mercy. Mercy, as the etymology of the word plainly shows, is that noble sentiment of the soul which softens the heart towards the unfortunate. To be merciful is to be moved, to be touched, to feel sympathy when we see or hear of any one suffering from, or threatened by, misfortune. Now even those who are hardened and do not possess this quality, cannot refrain from admiring and extolling it in others.

The word Mother and the word Mercy, express then

all the influences which possess the greatest power over the human heart. But when these two words are united, and represent in their union the nature and essence, as it were, of one person; when, moreover, this person has attained the perfection of greatness and glory, when it is none other than the Mother of God and Queen of heaven and earth, it becomes a name which leads captive our admiration and our love. Therefore, God has given us all this in the Blessed Virgin, making her both Queen of Heaven and Mother of Mercy.

Does it not seem as if Jesus, in giving to his Mother's sovereignty only what are its most lovely, most amiable qualities, wished to show all the tenderness of his Divine Heart, and at the same time to render it impossible for us to resist her maternal sweetness?

Who can despair of salvation if he has recourse to her who is the Mother of Mercy? Be then revered, loved, blessed, by all creatures, our Queen and "Mother of Mercy!"

II.

Mary's titles to the name of Mother of Mercy.

We recognise now that the name, Mother of Mercy, is one which is full of glory for Mary, and a source of confidence and consolation to us.

Upon what basis does it rest, and why should Mary be called the Mother of Mercy?

I. This name belongs to her, primarily, because she is Mother of God. In whatever manner we contemplate the divine maternity, the title of Mother of Mercy belongs to Mary. Mary is the Mother of Him in time, whom God the Father has begotten from all eternity.

To himself, God gave a name in which He glories, a name which breathes nothing but consolation to poor fallen humanity—it is the name, “Father of Mercies,” and “God of all consolation.”—2 Cor. 1, 3.

We see then how great was his desire to exalt and honour Mary, when by his Church He gives her the title of “Mother of Mercy” and “Comforter of the Afflicted.” How is it, dear and sacred Virgin, that you share such glorious titles with the Heavenly Father? It is because his Son is also yours. I know that God is mercy, infinite mercy, and that your mercy, created and finite, flows from the boundless ocean of kindness, *the Father of Mercies*; but He willed to pour out upon you such streams of mercy that you might bear the name, *Mother of Mercy*, and this resemblance with the Father becomes yours by a kind of law, because you communicated to Him his human nature when He was begotten of you in time, as God the Father, begetting Him for all eternity, communicated to Him the Divine Nature. Now, since the human and the divine nature of Christ subsist in one person, it follows that Jesus is the Son of God, and that you are the Mother of God; what is there then to surprise us, oh, blessed Mother! if you share in the titles of the Father of Mercies and the God of all consolation?

II. Mary is the Mother of the God Jesus, that is, of the God-Saviour. For this reason she must be the Mother of Mercy, since, as mother, she must bear some resemblance to her Son. What light this one word throws upon the greatness of Mary, and into what an abyss of delight does it plunge us! If, according to natural laws, a mother resembles her son, what heights are there to which the Blessed Virgin may not attain? Does not it strike us at once that Mary must bear as perfect a resemblance to Jesus as it is possible for a creature to do without becoming God.

Then, since her Divine Son, in his character of Saviour of the world, was all merciful, how can she be other than the Mother of Mercy? Mercy is, in fact, the most prominent attribute of the Saviour of the world. The angel said to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins." To save men from their sins, be the Saviour of sinners, the Saviour of the world; to be born into the world for no other reason than to save; to be *Jesus* in the complete and fullest sense of the word; surely this is to be merciful? She, to whom it was said: "You shall conceive and bring forth a son and He shall be called Jesus;" can she be other than the Mother of Mercy, when she is the Mother of Mercy Incarnate?

III. If you consider Mary in connexion with the Heart of Jesus, still more clearly will she appear the Mother of Mercy. Where shall we find God's mercy, the mercy which will save us, if not within the Heart of Jesus? It is not difficult to understand how through Mary we come to a knowledge of the Sacred Heart of her Son, and lose ourselves in its depths. We shall be tempted to exclaim with Peter:—"Oh, Saviour Jesus, oh, Beloved, it is good to be here. Let us here fix our habitation, let us make this our dwelling." Wherefore should we seek further proof that Mary is the Mother of Mercy? Does not our heart tell us so? Who will venture to say that mercy and the Heart of Jesus are not all one? If God ever created a heart which could not fail to be touched by the sight of misery, it was certainly the Heart of Jesus. Let us then enter into the depths of this mine of riches and beauty which we have been discovering, and we shall learn still more of Mary, the Blessed Virgin. After God—who was it that gave to Jesus that Heart, so beautiful, that God found it a worthy receptacle for all his treasures of mercy? Could not the august, the

holy Virgin truly say to Jesus, *Filius meus es tu?* "Thou art my Son." Is not the heart of Jesus at once the Heart of the Son of God and the heart of the Son of Mary? The flesh of Jesus, and therefore his Heart, was it not formed by the operation of the Holy Ghost from the virginal flesh of Mary?

This is why Mary's heart should lead us alluringly to the Heart of Jesus; but if this Heart of Jesus is a boundless ocean of divine mercy, is it possible that such an ocean should not overflow upon the mother who bore it within her, making her the Mother of Mercy.

IV. Let us conclude with the prophecy of David, the royal ancestor of Mary:—*Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui.* "We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple.—Ps. xlvii. 10.

Do you observe that he calls Jesus the Mercy of God? What is the temple in which this Divine mercy was given to us? Doubtless, the temple of Jerusalem, to which Jesus was carried when He was presented to his Father. But the first temple wherein He dwelt, the temple of his choice, the living temple, was it not the Blessed Virgin Mary, and, therefore, must she not be the Mother of Mercy?

How beautiful is the conclusion which flows from this thought! If Mary was truly the temple of the God Christ, and therefore of Divine mercy, it follows that all those who seek Mary will find in her a temple of mercy; and there—for it is the temple in which Divine mercy abides—there will they find Jesus, and in finding Him have life and salvation. With truth, then, may we apply the words to Mary:—*Qui me invenerit inveniet vitam et hauriet salutem a Domino.* "He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord."—Prov. viii. 35.

PRAYER.

Oh, Mary, good and ever blessed Mother! in meditating on your greatness, how sweetly we bow beneath the weight of your glory. Hail, Queen, Mother of Mercy! You are, after Jesus, our sweetest consolation in our sorrows, and our dearest joy in our sufferings. It is not possible that when Jesus has made you the Mother of Mercy you should abandon us; for if our sins render us unworthy of your favours, we claim your mercy because of our misery. You will not suffer any of us to be eternally lost when we invoke your name, and implore pity from your merciful heart.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

HOW BY COMPANIONSHIP WITH JESUS, THE MERCY OF MARY
INCREASED.

Salve Regina! Mater Misericordiæ!

“Hail, our Queen! Mother of Mercy!”

I.

The Word Incarnate filled his most holy Mother with mercy.

We have shown that Mary, being the Mother of Jesus, Mother of the Saviour and of the Father of all Mercies, must herself be the Mother of Mercy.

But if, as the result of her divine destiny, she was the treasure of mercy as she was also the treasure of immaculate purity, what an increase and growth must there have been of the compassion of Mary for the sinful and sorrowful during those thirty-three years which she passed in the companionship of Jesus.

And was not Jesus Incarnate Mercy, with all its irresistible attractions?

Sharing as she did the secret of God in the redemption of the human race, Mary could penetrate the depth of the adorable mystery of the Incarnation of God. A God made Man, that He might save men; might save rebellious and ungrateful men. This, Mary was able to grasp as no other creature ever will be able.

If our Lord said, concerning the pure of heart, that they should see God: *Beati mundi corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt*, Matt. v. 8, what a sea of light must have inundated the heart of her who, always immaculate, alone immaculate, even in her conception, had taken captive the heart of God? *Tota pulchra*

es et macula non est in te? “Thou art all fair, my love, and there is not a spot in thee.” Cant. iv. 7. Who has grasped with the mind, as she did, the infinite distance which separates the Godhead from our nothingness? Who could measure, as she did, the length, the breadth, the height, the depth of God’s mercy; the mercy of a God who had passed across that infinite distance that separates us from Him, and had come down to rebellious, thankless slaves, that He might take on himself their sins, and expiate them in his own flesh upon the Cross?

Who ever understood as she did those words of St. Paul: “He humbled Himself, becoming obedient, unto the death of the Cross.” Phil. ii. 8. Oh, God! what goodness! what clemency! what mercy!

We, alas! in our blindness, understand but little of this greatest of miracles, this mystery of mysteries, that of a God, infinite in essence and in glory, making Himself nothing, and clothing Himself with our nature in order to suffer for and save us. But the pure, the exalted, the seraphic soul of Mary understood it; and, whilst she bore within her breast the Incarnate Mercy, her heart was lost in admiration of such divine abasement, and it melted with tenderness whilst contemplating a love so full of mercy. “Oh, love! Oh, goodness! Oh, infinite mercy of my Lord and my God!” This is what Mary was ever saying, in the secret of her soul, while meditating on the mystery of God made man within her; and her maternal heart overflowed, in union with the Word, in pity for those whom Jesus had come to save.

II.

The growth of mercy in Mary by companionship with Jesus.

When her eyes beheld Mercy Incarnate in that little Infant lying in his poor crib; when she heard his sobs

and saw the tears flow, which were drawn from the compassion of the Child-God by the misery of the poor prodigal children of earth; when she heard her Son called by the name which He had himself chosen—the name of Jesus, which expresses divine mercy; when she saw that by this name of Saviour of the world, mercy would extend itself to all men, to all nations, and to all ages, how was Mary's compassion for the sinful and the sorrowful increased and intensified in this school of divine clemency? When, with unutterable love and an indescribable reverence, Mary pressed to her heart that merciful Child, did not the mercy of that most loving, most tender Heart pour itself forth into the heart of the sweet and gentle Mother?

As Jesus advanced in age He grew, as the Gospel tells us, in wisdom and in grace; not because from the moment of his conception He had not been filled with grace and wisdom; but, just as the sun, which is always full of splendour, manifests it more brightly as it rises in the heavens, so was it in the matter of the beauty and brightness of the Godhead, and thus the divine mercy became more and ever more clearly manifested in the sacred humanity of Jesus.

This ever-increasing manifestation of the goodness of Jesus took place in the sight of Mary, and thereby her heart gained, hourly, fresh supplies of grace and mercy.

A legend (it is but a legend, and yet gives a most natural picture of the Heart of Jesus during his earliest years) tells us that the Divine Child, saddened though he was by his sorrowful exile in Egypt, comforted every little child whom He saw shedding tears. Thus, whenever a mother could think of no other way of driving away her child's sadness, she would say: "I will take you to the little Jesus," and it was certain that, as soon as the gaze of the unknown infant, Jesus, was turned towards the weeping child, he would be comforted and shed no more tears. Just in the same way the good

and kind Virgin is ever to be called the Comforter of the afflicted, and for ever is to dry the tears of the mourner, who has recourse to her loving heart.

How well she understood and how closely she imitated the Heart of Jesus on the occasion of the marriage in Cana ! How admirably she there began to act in that maternal character, which was to be hers during all succeeding ages in the Church ! The newly-married pair saw that there was not wine enough, and began to feel ashamed of their poverty. Mary turned to Jesus, saying : *Vinum non habent* : "They have no wine ;" and, at her desire, her Son worked his first miracle, and thus changed into joy the sorrow of the wedded couple.

But when the Sun of Divine Mercy approached its meridian, when Christ made Himself known to the world, and by his public life came into contact with the poorest and the most sinful, how did the fire of his love burst into flame in the soul of Mary ! If, when they saw that sight was restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, and comfort given to every kind of suffering and sadness, the people in their emotion cried out : "He has done all things well ;" if thousands of men, fascinated by such prodigies of goodness, followed Jesus on his way ; if Zaccheus—a man who had grown rich by injustice—became changed on a sudden and bestowed the half of his possessions on the poor ; what an impression must have been made on the heart of Mary by this continuous manifestation of the bounty of the Heart of Jesus !

III.

The Heart of Mary inundated with mercy on Calvary.

It was, however, chiefly on Calvary that Mary received her consecration as *Mother of Mercy*. What floods of

mercy surged into her heart when she heard Jesus—nailed to the cross, and when He was lifting up his eyes to heaven—cry out: “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do;” when she heard Jesus say to the thief, who so short a time before was blaspheming Him: “This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise;” when she saw the blood of Jesus poured forth to its last drop for the sins of the world. Oh! it was then that a river of mercy flowed into the heart of Mary, and by the blood of her Son she was consecrated Mother of Mercy. “Woman, behold thy Son.” Luke, xxiii. 34.

Jesus was already dead when the tear-swollen eyes of the sorrowful Mother saw the brutal soldier turn the point of his lance towards that sacred Side—he pierced it, and thus opened the Heart of our Saviour. For all eternity was this infinite abyss of mercy opened to all in sorrow, to all sinners, and to all the just; the blood ran down that lance, and flowed upon that soldier, and he was the first conquest of the Heart of Jesus.

That lance pierced the Body of Jesus, but it also transfixed the living heart of Mary, and made that motherly heart the heart of the Mother of Mercy. Alas! how many a time since then has the heart of Mary been pierced—alas! it is daily pierced—with the Heart of Jesus.

The following account is taken from the annals of the Jesuit Fathers:

“A young Christian, dwelling in India, was leaving his room with the purpose of committing a sin, when a voice arrested him with the words: ‘Stop; whither are you going?’ He turned immediately, but saw no one; he was evidently quite alone. Then his eyes fell on a statue of our Lady of Sorrows, and he saw Mary draw forth the sword which pierced her heart, and handing it to him said: ‘Take this and pierce me anew, rather than wound my Son, by the sin you are meditating.’

“At these words, the young man felt his heart melt

within him, and bursting into tears, he prostrated himself on the ground, horrified at his guilt, and he implored pardon of Jesus and Mary."

IV.

Progress of the spirit in those who, like Mary, live in union with Jesus.

In bringing to a close this meditation, one important, and practical reflection must not be omitted. Mary made immense progress in sanctity by dwelling with Jesus. Jesus, as always present to his holy Mother, imprinted, so to speak, his likeness on her soul, and the Heart of the Son making itself one with that of his Mother, communicated to it its own virtue, especially its charity. The school in which the Blessed Virgin was taught, is also the school in which all saints are formed.

Jesus Himself told us this, when after the last supper He addressed his Father, saying: "Now, this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."—St. John, xvii. 2.

By the aid of grace, it is possible, even without familiar conversation with Jesus, to fulfil faithfully the duties we owe to God; but the practice of the great virtues, and the practice of perfection will be impossible.

To become holy, we must live in communion with God.

How was it that the Apostles attained to so high a degree of sanctity, how did they acquire that burning zeal and love which made them carry the knowledge of Christ into all lands, and brave every kind of torment? It was by living with Jesus.

And how, later on, did Saint Ignatius become transformed from a man of the world into so great a saint, and so great an apostle? It was by the contemplation of Jesus, present before him in the mysteries of

his Life and Passion. Thus it was that He shared with Mary, with Joseph, with the Apostles, the fruit which had been produced in them by the presence of Jesus.

Whence do they, who live in the practice of heroic devotedness, whence do feeble women—the Little Sisters of the Poor or the Sisters of Charity, for instance—gain the strength to triumph so victoriously over nature, except from their love for Jesus Christ? And do they not obtain this love by meditating on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, and his presence in the Eucharist? And is not that Holy Eucharist, are not those mysteries of the Life and Passion of Christ, for us also? Do we profit by them as we ought? Do we diligently exercise our faith in meditating on them?

PRAYER.

O Mary, most happy of all Mothers! you have never desired any good, any treasure, except your Jesus. In seeing Him, in possessing Him, you had all riches, and could say: My Jesus and my all! But I, alas! fascinated by creatures, have not eyes pure enough to see and to know Jesus. If I knew Him as you did, then, like you, I should love no one else! What progress should I then make in virtue, especially in the godlike virtue of charity. Dear Mother, be for me the Mother of Mercy, open my eyes to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, help me to realise the nothingness of all created things, and teach me to know Jesus.

Ave Maria.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

THE WONDERFUL MERCY OF GOD IN GIVING US MARY FOR OUR MOTHER.

Salve Regina ! Mater Misericordiæ !

“Hail, Queen ! Mother of Mercy !”

Mary is the Mother of Mercy, because she is the Mother of Jesus. “They call me Mother of Mercy,” she said, on one occasion to St. Bridget, “and very rightly ; for the Merciful Heart of my Son made me merciful towards sinners.” Let us now see why Jesus made his Mother the Mother of Mercy.

I.

Mary is the Mother of Mercy, because she is our Mother.

Christ was born for us. *Parvulus enim natus est nobis.* “A child is born to us,” said the prophet Isaias.—Is. ix. 6.

The angel also announcing his birth to the shepherds, said: “For this day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.”—Luke, ii. 11.

If, then, Christ was born for us, it was in order to give Him to us, to give us life by Him and make us God’s children, that Mary was made his Mother.

During the life of Jesus she fulfilled all the duties of a mother to Him, and did this to its very close with an incomparable love.

Like an heroic mother, she chose to be present as He drew his last breath, and, receiving his lifeless body into her arms, prepared Him with her own hands for the tomb. Then, her task of mother, as connected with Jesus, was over ; but a second maternity lay before

her, for she became our mother in the moment when her Jesus was on the point of being taken from her.

Jesus had been lifted up on the cross. Standing at the foot of the cross were his Mother and the beloved Disciple, St. John. Before leaving the supper-room on his way to die, Jesus had bequeathed to us the Eucharistic Mystery of his Sacred Body and his Precious Blood. One more legacy He had to bequeath—He bequeathed it on the cross—giving us his Mother, the only possession which remained to Him.

A moment only before that awful darkness fell upon the earth in sign of mourning, his glance rested on Mary, and He did not call her "Mother," because He was giving her to us, but said, "Woman, behold your Son."

This son was St. John, who, according to the authority of the Fathers of the Church, represented all the Disciples of Christ. And then Jesus turned to John and said: "Behold your Mother," and from that moment the disciple took her to his own home.

"For God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son."—John, iii. 16. Jesus it is who tells us this.

Can we not say in our turn, "Jesus so loved us as to give us his Mother, after giving us Himself." And what a Mother! All that God could bestow on a pure creature, He has bestowed on Mary; He has poured out upon her all the treasures of his love and grace, that she might become worthy—as far as was possible—of a Son whom He loved with an infinite love.

And this is the Mother who has been given us! It is like the act of a king who, having built for himself a magnificent palace, dwells in it for a short time before he gives it to some poor family, with all the riches it contains.

II.

God has given Mary as our Mother, in order to pour out his mercy more abundantly upon us.

Although God is the Father of Mercies, He is also the God of holiness and justice, and it is not possible that He should suffer the iniquities of men to remain unavenged.

It is true that our Saviour places Himself as mediator and advocate between our sins and Divine Justice, but we may well feel some fear even of Him, for He is God and Judge to come of the living and the dead.

What, then, has Christ done to save even the most guilty, provided that they are not obstinately resolved on their own eternal damnation? He has given a mediatrix between Himself and us, who may avert the strokes of his justice, because she is at once his Mother, and our Mother, too.

It is in this way that He has realised the most ardent desire of his heart—the longing that his mercy may rest upon all men. *Et miserationes ejus super omnia opera ejus.* “His tender mercies are over all his works.”—Ps. cxliv. 9.

And this is the secret of the mercy of the Heart of Jesus. As He could not divert the course of his justice in regard to those enemies, who, being in rebellion against Him, were incapable of receiving pardon, Christ gave to us a Mother so devoted to Him, that He could refuse her nothing: his own Mother, and yet, our Mother, who loves us most tenderly, who has nothing to do with the administration of justice, and whose sole attributes are goodness and mercy.

When Mary presents herself before the august Trinity to intercede for some sinner who has wearied the patience of God and has nothing but his avenging justice to expect, she hides this unhappy child of hers beneath her mother's mantle, and offers herself—so

pure, so immaculate, so holy—to the sight of God, and thus averts his wrath.

The Father sees in her his beloved daughter, who is dearer to Him than all the angels and the saints; the Son sees in her the most loving and loved of mothers; the Holy Spirit is ravished with his virginal spouse, and cries: “Thou art all fair, my beloved, and there is no spot in thee.”

The mother bows down before Jesus, her Son and her God; and no sooner does she appear than He calls to mind all she has done for Him.

For Him she was the most tender, the most devoted of mothers; for Him only did she live; for Him did she endure all the sorrows and sufferings of poverty and exile. With what love did she warm Him against her maternal breast! She did not abandon Him, heroic Mother that she was, in the shame and suffering of his Passion; with Him she drank to the dregs of the chalice of opprobrium; she insisted on showing herself openly to be the Mother of the Divine Malefactor, dying on the scaffold of the cross. With a heart bruised and broken by sorrow she remained at the foot of the cross during three hours, awaiting the moment when she might assist Him as He should breathe his last.

Would it be possible for a Son, a Son, moreover, who has taken the name of Jesus, to look on so good, so sweet, so holy a Mother, and refuse her anything? If the justice of the Son of God cries out for vengeance, the cry is stifled by that of filial love. Mercy triumphs; Jesus turns his heart towards his beloved Mother, and for her sake pardons the sinner.

This is how it happens that so many sinners manage to scale the heights of heaven by means of her whom St. Bernard calls the “ladder of the sinful.” What myriads of saints, who, but for Mary, would have spent eternity in hell, will sing for ever in heaven of the goodness of the Blessed Virgin, and of the infinite mercy of God!

III

The tenderness of Mary towards the sinful and the sorrowful who implore her aid.

After this, may not even the most guilty feel a new hope born within him, provided only that he lifts his eyes to her who is the sure refuge of sinners?

Never, never has it been known that any of those who have had recourse to Mary were abandoned; never has it been said, never will it be said, that Jesus has rejected the appeal of his Mother in favour of an unhappy sinner.

When He gave her to us as our Mother, could He have made her other than a Mother of Mercy, for who knew as He did the full extent of our misery—misery of soul and of body? And his purpose was that she should compassionate those miseries, as mothers pity the sorrows of their children.

After having brought forth Jesus in joy, it was for this object that she became our mother at the foot of the cross in sorrow. It is not possible that she can help pitying those who have cost her so much. She became our mother at the price of the Precious Blood of her Son, and thus it is in the wounds of Jesus that she sees us and compassionates us. Again, in receiving us as her children, she accomplished the last desire of her Son, as she watched Him expiring in the most cruel sufferings. When, therefore, Mary compassionates our misery—and above all, that greatest of all miseries, sin—she compassionates the sufferings of her Son, who bore upon the cross the burden of all our iniquities and of all our infirmities.

This kind Mother extends her mercy to our bodies as well as to our souls.

Blessed John Erolte relates the following account of

a man who was leading a most disordered life, and whose pious wife—after every other means had failed to convert him—induced him to promise that he would never pass an image of the Blessed Virgin without reciting an *Ave Maria*.

One night, when this man was on his way to commit some sin, he perceived a faint light at some distance from him. It came from a lamp which burned by night and day before a statue of the Virgin with the Infant Jesus in her arms. Drawing nearer, the sinner began, as was his custom, to say the *Ave Maria*, but to his horror, he noticed that the Child Jesus was covered with fresh wounds, from which the blood was flowing fast.

Astounded, yet moved by sorrow, he felt that his sins had caused those bleeding wounds, and he began to weep bitterly. Suddenly he observed that the Holy Child had turned his back upon him. What would become of sinners, sometimes, had not Jesus given them a Mother of Mercy to stand between Himself and justice? Now, seeing himself rejected by the justice of the Son, the guilty man, afflicted and disconcerted, began to address the Holy Mother. "Mother of Mercy," he cried, full of trouble and confusion, "your Son rejects me, but you are his Mother, and no advocate could be so element or so powerful as you are. Help me, my Queen, and intercede for me with your Son." Then the Virgin answered: "You sinners call me Mother of Mercy, and yet fill me with grief, by ceaselessly renewing the Passion of my Son and my own sorrows." However, the good Mother showed that she cannot reject any one who has recourse to her, even though he be the greatest criminal. She turned to her Son and began to entreat his pardon for this great sinner. But Jesus still remained angry with the offender, and then the Mother set down the Divine Child and knelt at his feet. "Son," she cried, "I

will not rise, until you pardon this unhappy sinner." We see here the character of Mary, as the Mother of Mercy, and her power over the heart of Jesus. Disarmed by this appeal of his holy Mother, He answered: "Mother, I can refuse you nothing" (mark this expression). "For love of you, I pardon him. Bid him approach, that he may kiss my wounds." Thus, we see, that not only Jesus refuses his Mother nothing, but also that it is for love of her that He pardons. And now, consider what happens when a sinner becomes truly converted. The man drew near, weeping bitterly, and as he pressed his lips to those bleeding wounds, and washed them with his tears, they forthwith healed. Jesus finally bestowed upon him the kiss of peace, as a sign of pardon.

Thus reconciled to God, the sinner became a saint, and spent the rest of his life in the practice of holiness.—*In promptuario. Apud S. Alph. de Lig.*

This history gives us a picture of the Father of all Mercies and of the Mother of Mercy.

And now let us hear how well Mary knows how to comfort her children in their afflictions. St. Alphonsus Liguori tells us of a Religious who was so tormented by scruples, that he felt at times tempted to despair. He never ceased, however, to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, and constantly meditated on her sorrows. At the hour of his death, he was more than ever tempted by the Evil One to despair, but whilst he lay on his bed the victim of this cruel suffering, Mary appeared to him and said: "My son, wherefore do you fear and grieve thus—you who have so often compassionated my sorrows? Jesus has now sent me to you, that I, in my turn, may afford you consolation. Rejoice, and come with me to Paradise." Shortly after hearing these sweet words of comfort, the good Religious joyfully expired, and followed the Mother of Mercy to heaven.

PRAYER.

Mary, my kind Mother, you are doing marvels of mercy every day, in restoring the life of grace to sinners, who, but for you, would bring upon themselves eternal death. Look down on me, also, a poor sinner, kneeling at your feet, and take pity on my soul. Never permit me to sink back into deadly sin, which is more to be feared than all conceivable deaths. And when I lie, the prey of the last cruel assaults of the Evil One, in the agony of death, be to me, then—I implore you by the Heart of Jesus—a Mother of Mercy, and save me.

Ave Maria.

NINTH MEDITATION.

MARY IS OUR LIFE.

Vita nostra, salve!

“Hail! our life.”

I.

The supernatural life of the soul.

Before we commence the consideration of the manner in which Mary is our life, it will be well to recall the fact that, for every one of us who is born into this world there are two lives; the life of the body and that of the soul; or, in other words, the natural and the supernatural life. When that moment arrives in which a man must incur the penalty of sin which was inflicted upon him in the Terrestrial Paradise, when those words, *thou shalt die*, were spoken, the tie which unites body and soul is severed; the spirit departs with its immortal life, leaving nothing but a corpse behind.

This is the death of the body; the death which gives over to worms and corruption all that is material in man. Jesus Christ did not choose to abolish death; He submitted to it Himself; but He did so that he might triumph over it, at the end of the world, by the general resurrection of the dead. Moreover, it was necessary that He should die, in order to prove his Divinity, by conquering death, though He died himself; thus showing that the Godhead was hypostatically united to his body, and that He was the resurrection and the life. He had said to Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life.”—John, xi. 25.

Christ's triumph over death will be fully accomplished, when at his command the dead shall rise from their graves, to glorify, throughout all eternity, either the goodness or the justice of God.

The second life is that of the soul. We are not here concerned with that natural life which all enjoy who are created immortal, but with that supernatural and Divine life, the life of grace, which is the created and finite participation of the uncreated and infinite life of God.

This marvellous life of the soul can be given only by God, for it is nothing less than God Himself present within us by charity, and working divinely within us by grace. It is because God has actually begotten us into this life of adoption, that we say to Him, in union with Christ, who became our Brother, "Our Father who art in heaven."

Jesus himself revealed to us this adoption of sonship and of brotherhood when he said to his Apostles: *Ascendo ad Patrem meum et Patrem vestrum, ad Deum meum et Deum vestrum.* "I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God."—John, xx. 17. St. Paul also speaks of our having received the spirit of grace, and of our having become the objects of God's paternal love, so that we address Him as "Father." *Abba, Pater.*—Rom. viii. 15. St. John says also that in this Spirit which is shed forth upon us, "we are called to be the sons of God"—1 John, iii. 1 and St. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Romans: "If sons, heirs also; heirs, indeed, of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."—Rom. viii. 17.

Therefore, as in the natural order, the soul gives life to the body, so God gives to our soul, not in virtue of our nature, but by grace and by adoption, the supernatural life: a life so sublime, that those who possess it are called by the Holy Spirit, *Divinæ consortes naturæ*, "partakers of the Divine nature."—2 Ep. Pet. i. 4.

II.

Christ is the author and the source of the supernatural life of the soul.

To whom do we owe, both the future resurrection of our body and the supernatural resurrection of our souls, if not to Him who, in order that we might merit those gifts, made himself our Brother? To the Son, consubstantial with God, who made himself man, in order to save us from the death of sin; to Jesus Christ, who reconciled us with the Father, cleansing us from our iniquities, by his own blood?

He is, then, our Life, since by his Passion and Death He gave us back life, in giving us anew God for our Father.

Therefore He has said: *Ego sum vita*, "I am the life"—John, xiv. 6; and in another passage: "I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"—John, x. 10. Yes; even more abundantly than in a state of innocence. *Ego veni, ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.*

In dying for us, Jesus has won a triple victory over death; for he has gained for us a triple life—that of the body, which shall one day be raised from the dead; that of the soul, restored to the life of grace by Divine adoption; and, lastly, the eternal life of glory. "O death, where is thy victory?" *O mors, ubi est victoria tua?*—1 Cor. xv. 55.

But all has not been accomplished upon the cross. Jesus has merited for us all the graces that shall ever be poured out upon mankind, but these graces must be applied to us individually. This application is effected unceasingly when He communicates to all who desire it the life of grace, in anticipation of that life of glory which shall hereafter be given to their bodies and to their souls.

Just as He is eternally begotten of his Father, so in the order of grace does He beget us unceasingly in this world to the divine life; and herein is the most touching, most sublime proof of his love, and, at the same time, the sole and final end of his Incarnation.

As it is Jesus who by his death has won us back the life of the children of God, so is it Jesus, and Jesus only, who preserves that life within us, who nourishes it and makes it grow by an intimate and stupendous communication of himself.

"I am the Vine," He said, after He had instituted the Holy Eucharist, "and you are the branches. Without me you can do nothing. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit."—John, xv. 5.

The branches live by the sap of the vine, which passes constantly to them by means of countless secret channels: here is an image of our supernatural life.

Our life is Jesus; it is from Him we receive life, for we are his members, as the branch is a member of the vine. The life of grace proceeds from the Heart of that Divine Vine; and just as the blood in our veins passes unceasingly from the heart to the members, and returns to renew itself and purify itself in the heart, so does life ceaselessly flow from the Heart of Jesus, and pass to all the mystical members of the Saviour, by means of the sacraments, which are the chief veins and arteries of the Church, as well as by other hidden and mysterious channels of grace.

The Adorable Eucharist—ah! what a divine channel that is of life and love. But no; it is not a channel, as other sacraments are, it is the source itself: it is He who said: "I am the life. . . . I am the Bread of Life. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him."—John, vi. 35-57.

He dwells in me and I in Him! What, then, am I? Oh, admirable Sacrament!—oh, Sacrament to be for

ever beloved!—which makes us as gods! *Ego dixi, dii estis, et filii Excelsi omnes.* “I have said: You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High.”—Ps. lxxxix. 6.

How little value should we set upon the noble titles of this world, did we but realise what nobility is in heaven—did we but know what it is to be a son of God!

III.

Operation of Mary in the dispensation of the supernatural life.

We have given to God that which belongs unto God.

Let us now specify the part which God has given to Mary in the communication of the supernatural life within us, and let us show in what sense we may rightly call Mary our Life.

All life comes from God, but God can make use of creatures to communicate supernatural life, as well as for the communication of natural life. Thus, He makes use of the priest for the regeneration of the soul in baptism, and this is why priests are called the Fathers of souls.

Thus, too, in a special manner, God has given us a Mother; and she is the Mother of all those who are born to the life of grace.

Just as God the Father would have the consent of Mary for the Incarnation of his Son in our human nature and for his birth according to the flesh; so it is his will that, in the spiritual birth of Christ within the soul by divine grace, Mary should play her part of Mother. He has chosen that in her capacity of Mother she should ennoble our souls; and, therefore, in the language of the saints, He makes her the treasurer of

his graces, and, as it were, the channel through which all graces should pass that He pours out upon us.

Eve is the Mother of us all in the natural order; Mary is, in a true sense, our Mother in the supernatural order. Take away Mary and you take away the birth of a Saviour, and our own birth on the hill of Calvary. Without her the present scheme of salvation is meaningless. With her everything becomes intelligible. "God willed that we should receive all by Mary," writes St. Bernard. *Totum nos habere voluit per Mariam.*

In exchange for the human life which Mary had given Him, with its treasure of our miseries, Jesus gave to her the divine life of grace in such abundance that she can dispense it to all without exception, in giving Jesus to us—Jesus, who is the Life.

Mary was made the depository of this life when she gave birth to Jesus: *De qua natus est Jesus.*—Matt. i. 16. She communicated it to us on Calvary, when she consented to the death of her Son upon the cross, as she had consented to his Incarnation. She dispenses this life of grace without intermission, by obtaining it for us through her all-powerful intercession.

Mary is the tree of life planted in the midst of death, and the dead return to life by means of the fruit of that tree.

This is why the Church says to Mary: *Benedicta tu, filia, a Domino, quia per te fructum vite communicavimus.* "Blessed art thou, Daughter, by God, because through thee we receive the fruit of life."—Ex Off. Assumpt. B.V.

Let us linger yet longer upon this thought. Mary is the tree, by reason of her divine maternity; Jesus is the blessed fruit. *Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui.* "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."—Luke, i. 42.

God, undoubtedly, is the author of the tree and of its fruit, but God does not give the fruit without the tree; his will is that the tree shall produce and then give the fruit.

Consequently, whoever eats of the fruit, it is to the tree that he is directly indebted. Observe what follows from this as a necessary conclusion. He who would seek Jesus, the blessed, life-giving fruit, will find Him on the one tree which yielded that fruit; and this tree of Paradise is the glorious, the well-beloved Mother of God. *De qua natus est Jesus.* "Of whom Christ was born . . . the blessed fruit of her womb."

God gave Jesus to Mary, He has willed that we should obtain Jesus only by Mary; and since—according to the expression of one of the Fathers—God never takes back his gifts, He still grants to Mary the possession of Jesus, and wills that we should always go to her to find Jesus, and with Jesus life and grace.

Upon each leaf of the tree that gave us this blessed fruit, these words are printed, and rightly the Church puts them into the mouth of Mary: *Qui me invenerit, inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino.* "He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord—Prov. viii. 35.

After this it will not be difficult to comprehend why, according to the feeling of the Church, a true, a faithful, a constant devotion to the Blessed Virgin is placed among the most certain signs of predestination. "A servant of Mary shall not be lost:"—and why? Because he loves Mary, and Mary loves those who love her. *Ego diligentes me diligo.*—Prov. viii. 17. But if she allowed such to fall into hell, would that be loving them? To love Mary sincerely and, nevertheless, be damned, is simply an impossibility. The Blessed Virgin having so much power with her Divine Son, will surely, for the sake of those who love her, draw life and salvation from that source of salvation and life, the Heart of that Saviour of whom she is the Mother.

What a consolation, what a joy, to feel that we love the Blessed Virgin; to be assured by the testimony of our own hearts that it is our delight to salute her daily

with the *Ave Maria*; to visit her sanctuaries with love; to reverence her images; to have the habit of saying the Rosary with devotion; to wear her scapular with confidence; to follow each year the services of the Month of Mary; to take pleasure in decorating her altars; to sing her praises and make her known and loved.

If it is thus in your case, you may say to Mary, when you are on the point of death: "Mary, you know that I have loved and honoured you during my life; now that I am dying, save me." Do you suppose that if you can thus address her in that decisive moment, she would be capable of answering: "Yes, I know that during many years you have followed the devotions of the month dedicated to me; that you have often recited the Rosary, often invoked my aid for the hour of your death: I know that you have communicated on my Feasts, and that you have spread devotion to me; nevertheless, I will not save you, but will allow you to fall into hell. I am able to save you, for I need only ask your salvation of my Divine Son, who refuses me nothing; but I shall not make the request. After having served me, you may burn and blaspheme for all eternity: it is useless for you to pray, for I shall not answer your prayers!" Could such words as those possibly issue from the lips of the tenderest of Mothers, the Mother of Mercy?

The Blessed Eulalia relates a fact concerning herself which shows how Mary is especially the mother of those who are devoted to her honour. She had consecrated herself to God in the Religious life, and there became a saint. Her devotion to Mary was most remarkable; every day she renewed her confidence in her, and trusted herself wholly to her protection. Her favourite prayer was the *Ave Maria*, which she was never weary of reciting. In reward for her love a great favour was granted to Eulalia.

One night she was awakened by a sweet voice saying:

"Are you asleep, Eulalia? Are you asleep, my child?" It was the Blessed Virgin who thus addressed her, and who made known that she was present.

"No, my beloved Queen, I am not asleep," replied Eulalia. "But how is it that the Sovereign Lady of the world deigns to visit so wretched a sinner as myself?"

"Fear not, my child," answered the dear heavenly Mother; "I am your Mother, and I love you because every day you honour me. But if you wish to please me still more, and to obtain fresh graces, recite the Angelic Salutation less rapidly. Know, my child, that this prayer is very acceptable to me, and especially the words, *The Lord is with thee*; for my heart overflowed with joy when the angel announced my Divine maternity. That joy is renewed whenever I hear my children say reverently, 'The Lord is with thee.'"

Whilst Eulalia was thanking and praising the Blessed Virgin for vouchsafing to her so glorious a vision, the Queen of Heaven disappeared in a cloud of dazzling splendour.

PRAYER.

Oh, Mary, if anyone could suspect you, the Mother of Mercy, of permitting those who have served you to be lost, he would indeed be a monster and a blasphemer; he would outrage your goodness and be guilty of an offence against your most loving heart. Never will you abandon those who have recourse to you. Are you not the kind and loving Mother of those whom Jesus loved so much, in spite of their sins, that He poured out his blood for them even to the last drop. Our greatest, our most delightful surprise after death will be when we see the goodness of your Son, and your unspeakable mercy towards poor sinners. Then shall we cry out to you in a rapture of gratitude and of love: "Hail, our Queen! Mother of Mercy! Hail! our Life for all eternity. Amen.

Ave Maria.

TENTH MEDITATION.

THE MANNER IN WHICH MARY INTERVENES IN THE COMMUNICATION OF SUPERNATURAL LIFE.

Vita nostra, salve !

“Hail, our life !”

That Mary is our Mother, and that we should look upon her and invoke her as our Mother, is a point about which no Christian can entertain a doubt; for it is in this sense that the Church interprets the words uttered by Jesus when He was dying. “Behold thy Son: Behold thy Mother.”

If Mary is a mother she must communicate life otherwise she would not be a mother.

What then is the life she obtains for us? Evidently it is not our natural life; it must be then according to the supernatural order that she is our Mother, and it is the supernatural life which she obtains for us. But in what sense can we say that she obtains for us supernatural life, which is no other than the life of grace, the life of God's adopted children; a life which, by its intrinsic nature, makes us sharers, by a created participation, in the Divine Nature, and gives us a right to the Beatific Vision. This life which, in a limited sense, may be called Divine, must come directly from Jesus Christ, and from no one else.

But it reaches us by the means of Mary: first, because Jesus came to us by her alone. As she is the Mother of the Head, she is the Mother of the members of the mystical Body of Christ, of which He is the Head, and of which He is the Divine and supernatural life.

Thus, in the order of grace, is realised that Divine unity which is stamped upon the works of God; one mystical body, of which Jesus is the Head and we are the members: one Mother, who is at once Mother of that Head and of those members: Mother of Jesus Christ and our Mother; Mother of Jesus Christ in the natural order and Mother of us in the order of grace; that is to say, in the order which was the end of the Incarnation.

Secondly. The life of grace comes to us by Mary through the powerful strength of her intercession; an intercession possessing a twofold force, since she is our Mother, and at the same time the Mother of Jesus.

Let us now consider more particularly how Mary fulfils in our regard the position and office of a Mother by giving to us the life of grace, which is, in other words, her Divine Son present and working within us. This she does in three ways: she co-operates efficaciously—

1°. In causing Jesus to be born within us.

2°. In preserving Jesus within us.

3°. In causing Jesus to grow within us.

Before, however, we enter upon this subject, it will be necessary to form an accurate theological idea of the connexion between Christ and a soul in the state of grace.

I.

The nature of the divine life which we receive from Jesus.

In the wondrous order of grace, Jesus is our life. He has said, *Ego sum vita*. “I am the life.”

When He came into this world, and took upon himself our human nature, He did so that He might give us life, and give it more abundantly. When some one has received this life abundantly, as did St. Paul, then may such a one venture to say, *Vivo autem, jam non ego*,

vivit vero in me Christus. “I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.”—Gal. ii. 20.

Further, it is true that the chief means Jesus has chosen by which to communicate his life to us, is the Holy Eucharist. In this adorable Sacrament, He unites himself to us by an union impossible to any creature; for in the Eucharist not only does He unite himself to us as a father unites himself to his son when he clasps him in his arms, but He enters into us. He mingles, as we may say, his divine humanity with our humanity, and we become, as St. John Chrysostom affirms, one body, one flesh with Him.

Jesus has himself said—and no expression could give so clear an idea of union, and constant union—“He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him.” Wherefore does he thus abide? To give us, to continue ever giving us, his spirit and his life. This is proved by the words of Christ, following immediately upon those already quoted:—“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.”—John, vi. 58. On the other hand, He has sent us his Spirit, who is the Holy Ghost; and by this Spirit (who is the infinite love of the Father and the Son), He has poured into our hearts that divine charity which is life, which makes us children of God, which establishes between us and God a relationship of love—paternal love on the part of God, filial love on our own part—and thus we are called, and thus we truly are the children of God. *Ut filii Dei nominemur et simus.*

How great is the goodness of God in raising us to this dignity during this life, and in giving us by his sanctifying grace the right to enjoy the beatific vision for all eternity!

Should we not cry out with holy Job: “Lord, what is man that Thou hast magnified him.” *Quid est homo quia magnificas eum.*—Job, vii. 17.

But if God gives himself to man, and if He causes us to become partakers of the divine nature, that does not imply that He gives us his divine essence, his Being, for that is incommunicable, and we cannot become God. And although we thus partake of the divine nature, it is but a created and finite participation, just as the existence which the creature receives from God is a participation bearing some resemblance to the Infinite Being, without in any sense becoming that Being himself. Again, our union with Jesus Christ is a true and a very close union, but it is in nowise that hypostatic union which made one, in Jesus Christ, in the Person of the Word, both the divine and the human nature. If such a union were existing in ourselves, we, like Christ, should be God.

The Word united Himself hypostatically to our human nature, but only in his holy Humanity, not in ours. However closely we may be united to Him by the Blessed Sacrament and by the Holy Spirit, we remain all the time pure creatures, whilst He is very God. He dwells in us and we in Him; but not in a manner which makes us one person with Him. He acts within us by his Divine Spirit, but it is not by the transformation of the substance of our individual being that He becomes, so to speak, part of us. He is in us; but He is, at the same time, absolutely distinct from us, whilst He is the principle of that love which acts within us, sanctifying us, and guiding us by its divine influence and light.

Hence the grace, by which Jesus dwells within us, constitutes, as united to our souls, the principle of a supernatural and divine life.

Thus, therefore, Christ remains Himself, and does not become *us*, notwithstanding his divine action within us. It is thus also that the Blessed Virgin, united though she was to Jesus as no other creature can ever be, had no hypostatic union with Him; but it was within

the body of Mary that the word of God, the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity, accomplished the hypostatic union of the divine nature with our human nature, in his divine Person.

II.

Mary gives us life, by co-operating in the birth of Jesus within us.

We may now, without fear of running counter to theological doctrine, consider how Mary filled the office of Mother in our regard.

Mary is our Mother; she gives us life because she co-operates in the birth of Christ within us.

We have seen that Mary is the Mother of Mercy. Now this great mercy she exercises with regard to those persons who, through mortal sin, have died to grace, by gaining for them renewed friendship with God. It is by doing this that she shows herself so pre-eminently a mother, helping the soul to be born again to grace, and assisting in restoring it to supernatural life.

When Jesus, at the point of death, gave St. John to Mary to be her son, He evidently intended, by this act of filial love, to give some consolation and support to that holy Mother in the person of the beloved disciple; but, according to the opinion of the Church, there was also a hidden mystery in this, his last will and testament.

We have already said that St. John was the representative of all the future disciples of Jesus, and it is to these that our Saviour spoke when He said: "*Ecce Mater tua*," "Behold thy Mother." As the first Adam had a woman as an accomplice in his work of sin and death, Jesus chose to have a woman who should share in his work of redemption. Mary was the new Eve, the helpmate of the new Adam in the restored life of souls, and she became thus the true Mother of the living.

The Psalmist says in the sixty-sixth Psalm: *Terra dedit fructum suum*—"The earth hath yielded her fruit." What is that sacred earth which has given the blessed fruit expected during so many ages, if not the Blessed Virgin Mary?

Made fruitful by the Holy Spirit, she has brought forth the Messiah, the wheat of the elect. *Benedictus fructus ventris tui*.—"Blessed is the fruit of thy womb." But she was to bring forth also a countless multitude of other fruit; for she was destined not only to be the Mother of Jesus Christ in the natural order, but she was to become in the supernatural order the Mother of all those who should be members of Christ, by assisting in causing Jesus to be born within their souls.

"Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die," said our Saviour one day, when speaking of Himself, "itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."—John, xii. 24.

When the earth has produced a grain of wheat, it will have it given back that many ears of corn may be produced. This is what took place on Calvary. The heavenly seed was about to die, but it was, in a certain sense, in order that by dying the grain might return to the bosom which had brought it forth, and thus produce a countless number of other grains.

Our Lord said to his Blessed Mother, when he communicated to her this marvellous fruitfulness, "Behold thy Son." As the grain bursts open before it germinates, so the Divine grain opened itself upon the cross to bring forth the germ of the Church. "But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side."—John, xix. 34. The lance which opened the Heart of Jesus caused no pain to his already inanimate Body; but it transfixed the soul of the new Mother whom the Saviour had just given us, with an unspeakable sorrow. It opened the furrow of that virginal earth from which the root of Jesse had sprung, in order to let the grain it had

produced fall back into it, and cause it to bring forth in sorrow the regenerated human race.

Jesus taken down from the cross and placed, when lying dead, on Mary's lap and bosom, was the Divine grain given back to the earth from which It had sprung forth. Thus did Mary become the Mother of all the children of God to the consummation of the world; thus also her sons throughout all generations arise and declare her Blessed. *Surrexerunt filii ejus et beatissimam predicaverunt.*—"Her children rose up and called her blessed."—Prov. xxxi. 28.

Mary is then the Mother of all mankind; for if all would have recourse to her, there is not one within whose soul Jesus would not be born through sanctifying grace, by virtue of her meditation. Doubtless we can obtain everything directly from the infinite mercy of the Heart of Jesus; but Jesus acts conjointly with the Holy Mother whom He has made Queen of Heaven, Queen of the world, and Mother of the elect in the order of grace. He has willed that we should receive all by her. *Totum nos habere voluit per Mariam.*

If we had to say how many persons have owed, and daily owe, their conversion to Mary, the task would not be a difficult one, for how many can we find who have recovered lost grace without the intervention of the Mother of Mercy?

In his *Journal des Anges*, the Rev. Father Corret relates a fact which affords a fresh instance of the inexhaustible tenderness of Mary, and shows how willingly and promptly this Mother of Mercy answers the prayers of those who have recourse to her in their distress.

"Sometime ago," he says, "I went to Ath. I found in that town a regiment of English soldiers, the Colonel of which was a Catholic, and the men, for the most part, heretics. An English Jesuit Father was appointed as chaplain to this regiment, and the following anecdote

was related to me by him while it was of recent date, and he was still under the influence of the thrilling emotion it had produced in him :

“One of the soldiers had deserted, but was captured just as he was about to enter the town of Chièvres, and was immediately sentenced to be shot.

“The chaplain tried to convince him of the unsoundness of his religious opinions, and made great efforts to bring him into the true Church, out of which there is no salvation ; but despite his zeal, there appeared no hope of overcoming the obstinacy of the unfortunate man, who refused to listen and declared his resolve to die as he had lived.

“The chaplain left him ; though saddened, he was not discouraged. Being full of confidence in the Blessed Virgin he prayed earnestly himself, and obtained the prayers of others, for the poor prisoner who was to be executed on the following day.

“When the preparations for the carrying out of the sentence had been begun, the Jesuit Father made a fresh and last attempt, entreating the soldier to ask God to enlighten him, and also to invoke Mary the refuge of the distressed.

“All was in vain, and they fastened the bandage round the eyes of the condemned man.

“‘Farewell then, my son, farewell for ever ;’ said the priest, who could not refrain from weeping. ‘You are going to enter into a terrible eternity, yet even now the Blessed Virgin will protect you, if only you will pray to her.’

“‘I shall not pray to her, for it is not allowed,’ said the deserter, ‘we may only pray to God.’

“‘Well my son,’ rejoined the priest, ‘at least, offer this petition with me : Mary, ever a Virgin, *if it is right to pray to you*, I now invoke your aid. Assist me in this terrible moment.’

“The man was lost awhile in thought. ‘Very well,’

he said, gruffly, 'I am willing; I suppose one may say such a prayer as that.' Then he repeated aloud, 'Virgin Mary, if it is right to pray to you, I now invoke your aid, assist me in this terrible moment.'

"No sooner had he uttered the words than he tore the bandage from his eyes, crying, 'Yes, yes! we may pray to Mary; I do not doubt it any longer. She is giving me light, I feel it, I want to die a Catholic.'

"All who were present uttered an exclamation of surprise: the execution was delayed. In the meantime, the poor man went to confession, and he then made his abjuration in the presence of all his comrades, and died a most edifying and beautiful death."

"While relating to me this wonderful story," adds Father Coret, "the chaplain could not refrain from shedding tears; and I found that the whole town was so moved that they could speak of nothing else but of the death of the deserter who, at the last moment, was converted to the faith."

PRAYER.

Oh, Sacred Mother, you gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem only that he might be born within our hearts; bring about this, your most ardent desire, and cause Jesus to be born within my poor heart; and if this heart of mine is full of misery and sin, if, forgetting the dignity to which God had raised me, I have lowered myself to the level of the beasts that have not reason, remember that Jesus, to make good my base dishonour, chose to be born in a stable, the shelter of which He shared with brute beasts. Since, therefore, so many sinners drive Jesus from the lodging He seeks in their hearts, come and bring Him forth anew in the stable of my soul, and let the angels once more sing "Glory to God" for his mercy, "and peace on earth to men of good will."—Amen.

Ave Maria.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

MARY PRESERVES AND INCREASES THE LIFE OF GRACE WITHIN
HER CHILDREN.

Vita nostra, salve !

“ Hail ! our life.”

I.

*Mary is our life, because she helps us to preserve within
us the life of Jesus.*

Mary not only causes Jesus to be born within our souls, but she preserves Him within us ; that is to say, she helps us to preserve the grace which is the life of Jesus within us.

The cruel enemy of God and of our souls is ceaselessly seeking, like another Herod, to put to death Jesus within us by our sin, in order that he may himself reign in our hearts and bring about our damnation.

What would become of us if Mary was not near to save us, as she saved the Holy Child, her Son ? He, to outward seeming, was a weak and helpless infant ; we not only appear weak and unable to help ourselves, but are so in reality, whilst our enemies are very numerous, greatly to be feared, and filled with fury. “ Your adversary, the devil,” says St. Peter, “ as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.” —Pet. v. 8. He makes creatures his helpers, and like the

sirens of the fable, they charm and seduce us. Even within the stronghold of our souls there are enemies, always ready to betray us, and to open the gate to the slayer of our souls; and what is worst of all, we love those who act as traitors towards us.

At any moment the enemy may take us by surprise, and at times when we have just gained a victory over him, and laid aside our weapons, he returns again, more terrible and better armed. Our life in this world is truly a warfare. *Militia est vita hominis super terram.*—Job, vii. 1. “I am not sure,” said a holy man, “that there is a single person who does not sometimes find himself standing on the very brink of the abyss.”

What then is to be done? Are we to dishearten ourselves, and allow ourselves to be defeated? No, this must never be; for “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able.”—1 Cor. x. 13. What should we gain for heaven, if we were without any struggles? and what glory should we give to God, if we proved not our love to Him on the battle-field of temptation? If we will victory, we may be certain of it; let us call to our help Mary, who is stronger than either the world or hell. Without letting our eyes rest on the enemy and his snares, let us have recourse to her.

“If the storms of temptation break over you,” says St. Bernard, “if the barque of your soul is in danger of striking against the rocks of tribulation, look at the Star of the Sea, invoke Mary In your dangers, in your sufferings, in your perplexities, think of Mary, invoke Mary! Never let her name be absent from your lips, nor from your heart.

“If you follow her, you cannot stray; if you pray to her you cannot despair; if she holds you up, you cannot fall; if she protects you, there is nothing to fear; if she leads you, you will never feel weary; if

she is propitious to you, you will safely reach your haven of rest."

Is she not your Mother? Does a mother ever abandon her children in the moment of danger? Listen to the words of St. Alphonsus Liguori, who was one of the greatest and most devoted servants of Mary: "It is our Mother who is calling us and is saying: '*Si quis est parvulus, veniat ad me.*'" "Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me."—Prov. ix. 4. Little children have the name of their mother constantly on their lips, and in every danger which threatens them they at once lift up their voices and cry, 'Mother! mother!' O sweet Mary, O tender Mother, ! this is precisely what you ask us. You desire that, becoming like children, we shall cry out to you in every danger, and have recourse to you, because you wish to succour and save us, as you have always done in the case of those amongst your children who have sought your assistance."—

Glories of Mary.

Conrad of Brescia, that bright ornament of the Order of St. Dominic, knew well the power and the kindness of Mary. Three strong feelings existed within him, all, apparently, incompatible the one with the other: an excessive love of purity, the most violent temptations against that virtue, and a great confidence in the Mother of God. His dread of consenting to the infamous suggestions of the devil was so great, that he became literally cruel to himself. Armed with a sharp discipline and with an iron chain, he scourged himself so pitilessly that the walls of his cell were reddened with his blood.

He could not understand why, in spite of his most severe penances, and the prayers which he addressed to Mary, he should continue to be assailed by such horrible temptations. The heavens seemed to him to be of brass, the Queen of purity appeared deaf to his cries and indifferent to his tears.

But Mary did not lose sight of her heroic son, and she caused him to come victoriously out of all his struggles, reserving for him in heaven crown upon crown. There came, however, at length, a moment when the Blessed Virgin kept silence no longer. Touched by the prolonged sufferings of her beloved son, she showed herself to him, accompanied by two virgins radiant with glory, at the very time when he was scourging himself to blood.

“For a long time, my son,” she said, “I have beheld your trouble, and have never ceased admiring and loving you for your courage and fidelity of heart. Now I am come to free you. Heaven is made glad by the love which you bear to virginal purity, and by all the efforts you have so painfully made to resist evil thoughts. Rejoice now, my son, and be glad, for I bring you the palm of victory, and I am going to heal you. My Sovereign Lord and Divine Son has charged me to make known to you two things: one that He will grant you whatever you ask of Him; the other, that I am now to extinguish within you those dangerous flames of which you do well to feel such dread.” As she finished speaking, the Mother of God seemed, by the hands of the two virgins who were with her, to pour upon the holy religious a heavenly balm, saying: “May this balm strengthen you, so that you may never more feel the painful sting which might wound your heart, and corrupt your virginal purity.” From that happy day, Conrad lived upon this earth as free from assaults of the flesh as if he were an angel from heaven.

In our temptations, let us practise mortification, and frequently recite the prayer, “*O my Queen and my Mother,*” &c.

II.

Mary is our life because she increases the life of Jesus within us.

Not only does Mary cause Jesus to be born and to be preserved within us, but she makes Him, moreover, grow in the hearts of her servants. What is it, in fact, that makes Jesus grow within us, and causes us to advance in perfection, if it be not the ever-increasing fire of Divine charity? Now, who is she, to whom God has given the power to set our souls on fire with Divine love, if not the Mother of pure love, that is, the most sweet and ever Blessed Virgin? "I am," she says, "the Mother of pure love." *Ego mater pulchrae dilectionis*.—Ecc. xxiv. 24.

Who can describe the joy of the most holy Mother when she has succeeded in kindling the flame of this pure love in some heart? A heart is loving Jesus!—what a happiness for her who is a Mother more than any other mother! With what delight does she strive to stir up more and more that sacred flame, until it becomes powerful enough to bring about a whole-burnt offering.

It is with this purpose in view that she inspires us with an ever-growing dread even of slight faults; that she moves us to frequent Communion, that heated focus of Divine love; that she gives us the spirit of prayer and leads us to her wounded Jesus, along the way of the cross.

And Jesus loves to entrust to Mary, the Mother of souls, the office of leading them on to perfection. He

made use of her thus in regard to the Blessed Margaret Mary, and the Blessed Virgin succeeded so well, that now this passionately devoted servant of the Heart of Jesus is raised to the altars of the Church.

But here is a conclusive proof, which must convince every one that Mary has been entrusted by her Son with the guidance of souls to perfection. It is the essential duty of the members of all Religious Orders to direct their efforts to the attainment of perfection, and we may say that every Religious Order professes to have the Blessed Virgin as its special patroness and Mother. To mention only a few; was it not our Lady of the Angels who took by the hand St. Francis of Assisi, that she might lead him to the summit of the highest sanctity? Was it not our Lady of the Holy Rosary who presided over the birth and glorious increase of the Order of St. Dominic, and who formed the most illustrious of its sons, the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas?

Inquire of the numerous congregations that are now filling the world with the fragrance of their charity and their holiness, inquire of them the name of their institute, and they will almost all tell you that it is connected in some way or other with the name of Mary. There are the Religious of our Lady of Mount Carmel, and of the Immaculate Conception. There are the Sisters of Notre-Dame; or the Sisters of Mary; or the Daughters of Mary; or the Mothers of Mary; the Mothers of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and so many others.

And again, all the religious congregations, be their name what it may, are consecrated, in some way, to Mary, the Queen of Heaven.

Is there a congregation in which Mary is more honoured and more beloved than in that of St. Alphonsus Liguori?

As for the sons of the Society of Jesus, they know that if they have Jesus for their chief, Mary is their

Mother, and every day in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, which they recite in common, they add a title, which is their own especial property—*Queen of the Society of Jesus, pray for us*. Was it not at Mary's altar, upon the Feast of the Annunciation, the very day when Jesus was conceived within her, that St. Ignatius, before he founded his society, hung up his knight's sword? Did not Mary, in an apparition with which she favoured him, bestow on him the admirable gift of chastity? Did she not, in company with the child Jesus, appear to him on, at least, forty-two occasions? Is it not she, who, according to the accepted tradition, dictated, as it were, to the Saint, his book of the Spiritual Exercises? Was it not at the foot of the altar of Mary, in the Church of Montmartre, that St. Ignatius, with his first companions, made his profession? Could one member of the Society be found who does not feel that he owes his vocation to the intervention of the Blessed Virgin?

A young man, whose testimony is above suspicion, relates a fact which redounds to the glory of Mary, the truth of which he can vouch for, since it has reference to his personal history. A few years ago he had gone to a lonely spot in order to bathe, and although he did not know how to swim, he had the imprudence to venture into a part where the stream was very deep. Suddenly he noticed that he could not touch bottom, and felt himself being carried away by the current. He was about to sink, when bringing to mind the confidence he had always had in the Blessed Virgin, he cried aloud—as a child calling to its mother for help: “Our Lady of Lourdes!” Scarcely had he pronounced the words when the waters closed over him. In this terrible crisis, with death looking him in the face, he gained twice the surface of the water, and twice was again submerged by the swiftly running stream. Finding that all fresh attempts

would be useless, he abandoned himself to his fate and tried to await his death with resignation. A crowd of thoughts press one upon the another, succeeding each other with great rapidity in his agitated mind, thoughts of his family, of his studies, of his future career; but, strange to say, the idea of eternity did not present itself; still, he knew that he was in the grace of God. However, a reflection suddenly took possession of him: "I invoked Mary, and yet I am about to die. How strange that is!"

But the Blessed Virgin was about to show him that she is a Mother, and that she cannot turn a deaf ear to the cries of her children. As the young man, so lately void of hope, made some slight movement, he felt his foot strike against something which he took to be a little branch lying in the bed of the river; it was the root of a tree. Stooping down, he took hold of it, and by dint of crawling beneath the water, he reached the spot where the root came to an end. Then he raised himself, instinctively, and found to his amazement that he had reached the bank and was safe.

Too weak to stand, he sank down upon the trunk of the tree whose root had served him so good a turn, until he felt sufficiently recovered to step on land, and forthwith he fell upon his knees, and wild with joy and gratitude, he thanks Mary, his beloved helper, and vows that his whole life shall be consecrated to her glory and that of her Divine Son. He asked but one grace, in return, that of never abusing the gift of life which they had restored to him, by the commission of a single mortal sin.

The promise was kept. That young man has given himself to God in the Society of Jesus, and his only ambition is to be employed in foreign missions.

He acknowledges that he owes his life, and the removal of all the obstacles which came in the way of his religious vocation, to the Queen of Heaven.

PRAYER.

Oh ! Mary ! be for me always a Mother, the Mother of pure love : and though my sins render me unworthy of burning with so pure and holy a fire, remember that you are the Mother of mercy ; purify me ; raise my heart above the corruptions of all irregular and earthly affections, so that you may increase the growth of Jesus there by the flame of Divine love. I ask this by the pure and loving Heart of Jesus.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

MARY IS OUR SWEETNESS.

Dulcedo nostra, salve !

“ Hail, our sweetness ! ”

I.*The virtue of sweetness.*

There is a sweetness, which is natural to weakness, and which marks the soul that lacks energy ; such is not the sweetness belonging to the Queen of Heaven, she who is “ terrible as an army set in battle array.” There is another kind of sweetness which self-love makes use of as a means of gaining an empty esteem or some worthless affection ; neither is this the sweetness of the Virgin who never lived for herself, or sought anything save the glory and the love of God.

The sweetness which we here extol in the Mother of God, is the virtue of sweetness ; a virtue impossible unless it is united with humility, charity, and patience ; and, as a consequence, impossible in those who have not strength to rise superior to every species of injustice, to every kind of ill-treatment, injury, affront, and contradiction. It is a virtue which is the reward only of the victor who has conquered and subdued the passion of anger, and which amidst the most violent assaults from within and without, maintains a never-varying evenness of temper. The supernatural virtue of sweetness is a heavenly perfume which is exhaled from the

fire of Divine charity, and which spreads itself equally all around, without excepting any. This heavenly perfume is purchased at a costly price, and laboriously perfected only by long combat and hard-won victories.

St. Francis of Sales, the mildest of men, was one day called to speak to a youth, who was so intractable and incorrigible that his mother, having exhausted all her methods of cure, brought him to the Bishop in order to have him severely reprimanded. The Saint began to address the youth with great sweetness, and as the mother objected to this manner of treatment, he said to her: "Do you wish me to lose in one quarter of an hour the little gentleness which I have collected drop by drop and with so much trouble during a period of twenty-two years?"

Here is an example of the virtue of sweetness! it is the heaven-born offspring of a strength that has risen to the level of habitual heroism; it is the honeycomb, but found in the mouth of the lion.

God is the infinite ocean of sweetness. *Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus.* "Taste and see how sweet is the Lord."—Ps. xxxiii. 9. *Quam magna multitudo dulcedinis tuæ Domine!* "How great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord!"—Ps. xxx. 20.

This Divine sweetness was sensibly and visibly manifested in Christ Jesus. St. Paul writes: *Apparuit enim gratia Dei Salvatoris nostri omnibus hominibus.* "The grace of God our Saviour, hath appeared to all men."—Tit. ii. 11.

In Christ also, according to the same Apostle, "the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared." *Cum autem benignitas et humanitas apparuit Salvatoris nostri Dei.*—Tit. iii. 4.

God poured out His sweetness into the loving, the outraged Heart of Jesus, and Jesus, whose very name is sweetness and love, could say: "Learn of me, for I am

meek and humble of heart." *Discite à me quia mitis sum et humilis corde.*—Matt. xi. 29.

II.

Mary is our Sweetness.

After Jesus, Mary is our sweetness. *Dulcedo nostra, Salve!* If you were asked, who in your own family was its model of sweetness, you would not hesitate a moment to reply: "It is my mother." In the mother is centred the sweetness of family life: her gentleness smooths all difficulties, and is as oil upon the troubled waters. This is why when a child has the misfortune to lose his mother we are filled with pity for him, and we say: "He has lost his joy; the sweetness of his life is gone." Now, our sweetness, our Mother in the great Christian family, is Mary; and when we think of our Protestant neighbours we are filled with pity for them, poor willing orphans as they are, since they have lost, and have even driven away from them, Mary, the good Mother whom Jesus bequeathed to us with His dying breath upon the cross. Unhappy children! they have lost their sweetness; they are motherless and in mourning, and their temples are deserted. All is bare, stripped, like a house made desolate by death and abandoned. No tabernacle, no sacred vestments, no life; for the Son has gone from them along with His Blessed Mother.

We, on the contrary, have Jesus dwelling in our tabernacles; Jesus whose presence fills the House of God with life and light; and with Jesus we have always the image of that sweetest Mother who from heaven looks down upon us, her eyes beaming with love and consolation.

The sweetness of our earthly mothers, the sweetness even of the Saints and Angels, is not to be compared with that of Mary.

When we say that Mary is our sweetness we mean more than that she is endowed with all sweetness; we mean something quite different to that: what we mean can be felt, but cannot go into words.

When telling Mary, our sweet Mother, that she is our sweetness, we do not merely wish to say that she is gentle and sweet—the sweetest as the purest of virgins—but that she is the delight and the charm of our heart; her very name alone is like a balm that has no counterpart, even in the Court of Heaven, a balm which heals our wounds and lulls our every pain. To think of Mary is to feel consoled; to love her is our joy and our happiness. Honey is not sweeter to our palate than she is to our hearts.

It is this sweetness which has caused such ecstatic raptures in the souls of so many saints who have gained an intimate knowledge of Mary. “Oh Mary, sweet mediatrix!” exclaims the venerable Louis of Blois, “Oh pious! oh clement! oh indulgent Mother! my refuge, my hope, my consolation. Oh sweet, oh gracious, oh amiable Virgin! Oh Virgin of unapproached beauty and peerless sanctity! Oh Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and joy of angels! Oh radiant star! oh spotless lily! oh loveliest rose! Oh paradise of delight! oh all-beloved of my heart, Mary! let a glance from your eyes fall upon me.”—*Concl. animae*.

But in what way is Mary our sweetness? First, because she has given, and still gives us constantly, the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus; for, while Eve wrought our ruin by presenting to our first father the fruit which was to bring death into the world, Mary has given us, and offered to God, the Divine fruit which restores us to life; it is from her that Jesus has been born.—*De qua natus est Jesus*.

Each time that we communicate, we receive from Mary's hands Infinite Sweetness itself. That young saint, Stanislaus Kostka, during an illness, was so impressed by this idea which he had pictured to his mind, that he conceived an irresistible longing to look on the reality: the Child Jesus in the arms of his Mother. In one less pure such a desire would have been presumptuous; but the Blessed Virgin was far from viewing it in that light with regard to this young angelic saint. Suddenly she appeared descending from heaven, bearing Jesus as a Child in her arms, and then laid Him down upon the bed of the sick youth, who lavished caresses upon the Divine Infant and pressed Him to his heart.

Again, Mary is our sweetness by reason of the inexpressible grace and sweetness with which God adorned her virginal body. Her expression, her voice, her movements, her heart, all was redolent of sweetness. "If," said St. Bernard, "if you can find anything in the Blessed Virgin which betokens severity, I give you leave to abandon her."

She is sweet and kind to the poor. At the marriage feast in Cana she did no more than turn an indescribably sweet look upon her Son, while saying, "They have no wine," and Jesus overcome by her maternal sweetness anticipated the hour of his miracles, and turned water into wine.

She was sweet and gentle even towards the cruel enemies who put her beloved Son to death; sweet and mild, even when she could hear the sound of the nails being driven into the hands and feet of Jesus; sweet, at the foot of the Cross; sweet, like unto the Lamb of God, for she uttered neither complaint nor reproach.

What need is there for further proof that Mary is our sweetness? Are we not merely saying what everyone knows?

When the unhappy sinner believes that he will find

in God only an angry and offended Judge ready to hurl against him the thunderbolt of his wrath, he has still, even in his despair, some feeling of confidence in the Mother of mercy; for he can never forget that Mary is sweet, that Mary is kind, and on the very brink of the abyss he will ever cry: "Good Mother, have pity on me!"

Once more, what marvellous effects are being continually produced upon human hearts by the sweetness of Mary! How many tigers has she not changed into lambs! How many children, how many youths of impetuous and unmanageable disposition have been rendered mild and gentle by her sweet influence!

And the young maidens who now are the sweet joys of their homes, to become at some future time, possibly, the consolation of their husbands, and the guardian angels of their children, (unless, indeed, they raise themselves to the lofty heights of a martyrdom suffered in a life of charitable deeds and apostolic administrations,) who has formed and moulded such characters as these? Only the sweet Virgin—the Mother of God.

Even Catholic families sometimes do not now realise sufficiently the wonderful influence of that most beautiful, that most impressive, that most touching type of sweetness, I mean the image of Mary holding in her arms the Child Jesus, and pressing Him to her heart with the heaven-born love and respect due to Him who is at once her Son and yet her Lord and her God.

If we only knew the influence which proceeds from merely a picture of the Madonna, exposed in some room where the children are wont to gather round their mother, we should give it the place of honour in our houses.

But alas! in these our days, fashions which are inspired and encouraged by the spirit of impiety are everywhere in vogue; we bow our heads be-

neath the yoke of a ridiculous and cowardly human respect.

The pictures of Christ and his Virgin Mother are handed over to the common people and the poor; and too often it would cause a blush of shame if their presence were remarked in a drawing-room.

There, only worldly subjects are admitted, and you, oh, tender Mother and the Queen of Heaven! and you oh, Jesus, God and Saviour, who redeemed us with your blood! the two whose images should be imprinted and engraven upon the hearts of mothers and children, you are thrust out of sight, in some unused room where it is known that no one will be able to find you! This is the way in which some people, who call themselves Catholics, honour their future Judge and his holy Mother! and they would blush to be seen showing any outward mark of love and respect to Jesus and Mary.

They do not understand that it is their duty to act in opposition to the current of modern scepticism which makes every effort to banish from view all sign of our holy religion. What will be the feelings of these heartless, these lifeless Christians, towards the God who has so loved them and the sacred Mother whom God has so greatly honoured, when they are summoned to another world, and behold the glory of Jesus and that of Mary!

PRAYER.

O glorious Queen of Heaven! O sweetest of Virgins and sweetest of Mothers! I cast myself at your feet, here in this valley of tears and darkness; look down on me with maternal love! Do not forsake me in my troubles, my sufferings, my combats; remember that you are my sweetness, because you are my Mother.

Be my sweetness always, when I am tried by sorrow and temptation. Be my sweetness above all when the bitterness of death encompasses me, so that I may repeat eternally in the company of all the elect in heaven:—*Dulcedo nostra, salve!* Hail! our sweetness! Hail!

Ave Maria.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

MARY THE MODEL OF OUR HOPE.

Spes nostra, salve !

“ Hail ! our hope ! ”

Before we consider Mary as the secure foundation of our hope, in the sense of the beautiful prayer we are meditating, let us first, for the greater good of our souls, contemplate the Queen of Heaven as the model of our hope.

I.

The virtue of hope.

Possibly there is no virtue so generally neglected by Christians as that of hope. Hence, we see, on the one hand, the despair which plunges so many sinners and unfortunate wretches into hell and keeps them there ; and, on the other hand, that faint-heartedness and that discouragement which impede the progress of numbers of people, otherwise well disposed, in the way of virtue and perfection.

It is on this latter side that the devil attacks men most commonly, in order to cast them into despair, or to weaken their energies. He knows that hope raises the soul, expands the heart, gives life and courage, inspiring in proportion with its growth an ever increasing vigour and generosity. Therefore, it is important, if

we would strengthen this virtue within us, to thoroughly understand its nature.

Hope is one of the three theological virtues. Consequently, in company with faith and charity, it has God for its object and rests exclusively upon Him. It is essential to salvation, and a virtue of strict obligation. But the obligation which in some matters would seem a burden is in its case one of our sweetest consolations; because it proves conclusively that our hope is placed on a foundation that cannot give way.

God could not oblige us to hope for that which He has not absolutely resolved to bestow. What a beautiful thought is this, even for the greatest sinners! However guilty a man may be, he is under the obligation to hope that God will pardon and save him, provided only that he pray and correspond with Divine grace. Had Judas spoken but one word, and instead of grieving Jesus by despairing of the mercy of his Divine Heart, had he uttered the single cry, "Jesus, pardon!" Jesus would have forgiven him as He forgave the penitent thief upon the cross.

In order that we may the better understand the height to which hope became elevated in the heart of Mary, we must distinguish two degrees in this virtue.

II.

Of the first degree of hope, which is essential to our salvation.

The first degree, essential and necessary to all, consists in confidently expecting from God's goodness both heaven and the graces necessary to obtain it; provided we faithfully correspond to these graces.

The sole basis of this hope is God; God alone :

it has no other object than the promises of God, his infinite goodness, and the boundless merits of Jesus Christ. Therefore, everything is divine in hope; the end—which is the possession of God; the foundation—which is God in the infallible pledge of his promises; undertaking to give us his all-powerful help, if we ask for it, and giving us, moreover, as our surety his Son Jesus Christ.

There is here no question about ourselves, except, indeed, of our prayer, and the concurrence which is always necessary to salvation.

If, in our hope, we were to rely on our own merits, our hope might be reasonable, taking God's goodness into consideration, for He will never allow Himself to be outdone in generosity; but this would not be the theological virtue of hope; it would be a hope purely natural and human.

It is not, therefore, difficult to discover the source of pusillanimity and of despair. The first mistake is made with regard to the object of our hope. We forget that God has only promised in so many words to give us eternal happiness and the graces necessary to obtain it. Now as God alone can know what are the means by which we may best reach this happy end, it follows that we ought to abandon ourselves wholly to his guidance, and, therefore, not be surprised or discouraged if He does not bestow, whether it be in the spiritual or temporal order, exactly what we ask for in our prayers, our novenas, and other pious exercises.

It ought to be sufficient to feel that God knows best what will be good for us, and that even if He does not grant us the gifts we specially ask for, He bestows others, and never leaves any prayer without its answer. "Ask and you shall receive."—John, xvi. 24.

Secondly, we mistake the foundation of Christian hope; that is to say, we rely on our own personal merits as the source of our hope, or we fix upon our demerits

as the ground for discouragement or despair. But why does the sinner despair? Because he forgets the mercy of God, the promises of God, and the merits of Jesus Christ, and sees in himself nothing but guilt, and in God nothing but justice.

He reasons after some such manner as this: "If I had done right, I should have reason to hope in God; but I have done wrong, therefore, I can expect nothing but his Divine vengeance, for God has done so much for me, and the only return I have shown for his goodness is ingratitude and rebellion. Thus I have no claim on his forgiveness; I have deserved hell and that will be my portion." These were the sentiments of Cain (Gen. iv. 13): "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." He forgot one thing only, but that was all important; namely, the infinite mercy of God.

In a lower degree, a pious person falls into the same error when he becomes discouraged on account of his infidelities and faults. What a terrible mistake we make when we abandon ourselves to discouragement and to despair! Christian hope rests wholly upon God; it must be completely independent either of our merits or of our demerits. When I make an act of the theological virtue of hope I do not say to God: "I hope I may get to heaven and may receive those graces by which I shall attain eternal joys, because I am innocent, pious, faithful, and generous towards the Almighty." No, I say, "O, my God, however great may be my demerits or my crimes, I rely wholly on Thy promise—in which I firmly believe—that Thou wilt always pardon one who prays from his heart, and heartily repents; I rely on Thy mercy, which is infinite; I rely on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, which are sufficient to expiate the sins of a thousand worlds; and I have a firm confidence, O Father of Mercies, that Thou wilt pardon me and receive me into heaven."

This is the sublime utterance of divine hope. Such

a cry as this, even if it were the cry of the heart of the greatest criminal the world has ever known, would pierce the high heavens and cause the angels to sing once more, "Glory to God in the highest." For can there be a greater glory to God than that of the Redemption, or a grander triumph than that of his mercies? Hence, Jesus said: "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner doing penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."—Matt. xviii. 13.

It is by hope understood in this sense that all glory is rendered to God, above all, the glory of his mercy, of which He is so jealous: *Et miserationes ejus super omnia opera ejus*; for, this glory He will share with none. *Gloriam meam alteri non dabo*.—"I will not give my glory to another."—Is. xlviii. 2.

Now we can understand why it is that God never works so great wonders for the advancement of his glory as when He rescues from the abyss the soul of some persecutor of the Church, or the soul of some great sinner, transforming them into a Paul, an Augustine, or a Mary Magdalen, and causing them to shine before the eyes of an astonished world as vessels of election and masterpieces of his glory; that is, of his mercy.

III.

The second degree of hope, the fruit of a perfect charity.

The first degree of hope, of which we have been speaking, has for its object the last end, common to us all; that is, our own eternal happiness.

The second degree, which includes the first, is immeasurably higher than it; for it is the fruit of perfect charity, having for its object the honour and glory of God Himself. Let us understand this more clearly.

Man was created to glorify God, by praising, by re-

verencing and serving Him. The glory of God is, in fact, the chief, the necessary, the essential end of the whole of creation. This glory man ought to give of his own free will to his Creator, because man is gifted with intelligence and free will, and his freedom of will has been given him for no other end but this.

Heaven is but the blessed reward of the fidelity with which man glorifies God here below. If hope, within a heart burning with Divine love, has for its object the glorifying of God as much as is possible; if some one loses all sight of himself, so to speak, and fixes his every desire and hope upon God's glory alone; if he longs for heaven, chiefly because there he will be able to glorify God for all eternity, then we can understand that hope has reached the most sublime pitch that any creature can possibly attain.

Now such was the hope of the Blessed Virgin. Disregarding her own personal interests, which had no value in her eyes unless they led her to praise God, she had but one hope, one desire, and that was to glorify God always and with ever increasing intensity. She loved God more ardently than did the Seraphim.

The cry of "Glory be to God" can be heard throughout her psalm of praise: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."—Luke, i. 46. As regards the foundation on which her hope rested, it is certain that never did any creature lean less on self or more upon God.

Penetrated by a sense of her own nothingness, she saw nothing in herself but the gifts of God; it was to Him that she referred them all: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me." She glorified God "Because He hath regarded the humility of his hand-maid,"—namely, had looked down upon the lowliness of her, who lived only for the interests of the Divine glory.

All that God did in her was the work of his pure

mercy : “ And his mercy is from generation to generation to them that fear Him.” What beauty and grandeur of soul ! Well may the sweet and Blessed Virgin have charmed the heart of God, and have become the delight of all persons who are not given over to a reprobate sense.

IV.

Examples and fruits of hope in Mary.

Before concluding this subject, it will be well to see in some example both the danger of discouragement and the extent of Mary’s mercy.

A young man had the misfortune, common to so many unhappy youths, to contract a sinful habit which became the source of countless offences against God. However, he had a sincere desire to amend, since the fear of God was hidden away in the depths of his heart, and now and then he made some effort to break the chain by which the devil held him fast, a captive to his shameful habit. But the force of custom was so strong that he relapsed again and again, and eventually, growing discouraged, he did what so many others do in similar circumstances, he imagined that he should never be able to overcome the temptation, and, therefore, came to the conclusion that it was useless to go to confession any longer. His confessor, remarking his absence, resolved to go in search of the sheep that had strayed from the fold, and availing himself of the permission the unhappy youth had formerly given him, went to visit him at a moment when it was certain he would be alone.

As soon as he saw the priest the poor young man uttered a cry of distress.

“What is the matter, my child?” said the ambassador of God, in a kind voice.

“Ah, Father, I shall be damned! I see that I can never correct myself, and so I am resolved not to try any more.”

“How can you say that, my child! On the contrary, I pledge you my word that, if you will only do what I am going to tell you to do, you will gain a victory over all the attacks made by your passions and by the devil, and will have the happiness of being reconciled with God. Go, at once, to the church, throw yourself at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, asking her to bring about your conversion, then come back to me.”

The young man obeyed, was soon prostrate at the feet of Mary, and weeping bitterly, so that the floor was wet with his tears, he begged the Blessed Virgin to have pity on a soul for which Christ had shed all his blood, and which the devil was trying to drag down to hell.

Then he sprang to his feet, and filled with confidence in her who is the refuge of sinners, went in search of his confessor, laid bare before him every wound which sin had made in his soul, received absolution, and then set about following the advice of his ghostly father. As a proof of the power and goodness of Mary, he became from that time a model of piety and fervour.

Let us now see an instance of a victory gained over despair, by one who was Mary's most faithful servant.

In the Apocalypse we read that “the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.”—Apoc. xii. 12. He knows that, when some one is dying, unless he makes haste, he will lose the soul which is on the point of escaping from his clutches.

When St. Andrew Avellino was in his agony, he was assaulted by the spirits of darkness and given over to

so violent a combat, that his religious brethren, standing by his bed-side, trembled with fear. They saw the face of the dying man all swollen and discoloured by the violence of his agitation, while all his limbs trembled and shook. Tears streamed from his eyes, his brain seemed at times about to give way; and all this was the outward manifestation of the fearful combat going on within his soul. In seeing one whom they knew to be a saint die in this manner, all present wept with pity and redoubled their prayers. In the midst of their alarm, however, they had one consolation. They perceived that the dying man was frequently turning his eyes towards an image of Mary, as if imploring her assistance, and they then remembered how often he had told them that the Blessed Virgin would be his sure protection in his last hour. And indeed she proved such. For, in a short time, the Saint regained his usual colour, calm, and confidence; his eyes rested on the image of his Mother in heaven, and the bystanders noticed that he was bowing his head lovingly, as if he were thanking her for having enabled him to win the victory.

It was thought also that the Blessed Virgin herself appeared to him; for suddenly a heavenly joy shone upon his features, and he gave up his soul to God in the most perfect peace. At the moment when he expired, a Capuchin Nun, herself in her agony at the time, said to her Sisters: "Recite the *Ave Maria*, a Saint has just died."

St. John of the Cross had a vision of Mary when he was on the point of death; and as he had grieved that he had not been permitted to see her sooner, she said to him: "Do not think, John, that I shall ever abandon at their last hour those who have been devoted to my service."—*Joannes, non est meum in hac hora meos devotos derelinquere.*

PRAYER.

O Mary ! O my hope ! I am not worthy to see you at the hour of my death, for I have so often deserved hell, so often pierced your heart and the Heart of Jesus, by my sins. But grant me, at least, you who are the Mother of Mercy and the refuge of sinners, the favour which I ask by the heart of Jesus—the Heart which loved you so much, and which was so much loved by you. The favour is that you will not abandon me amidst the dangers and the terrors of death. O Mary ! Mary ! in that terrible moment which shall decide my eternity, be with me, preserve me, defend me, save me ! Show yourself then to be my Mother, and that not in vain have I so often said to you in prayer : “ Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.” Amen.

Ave Maria.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

MARY, THE FOUNDATION OF OUR HOPE.

Spes nostra, salve !

“ Hail ! our hope ! ”

Mary is the model of our hope, but she is also, after her Divine Son, its sweetest and most secure foundation.

Before, however, we enter upon the consideration of a subject so full of consolation, we must be on our guard against a dangerous error at once and a criminal presumption, and we must consider carefully what are the conditions of hope.

I.*Conditions of hope.*

Although the gifts which God grants to our hope are, like the rest of his graces, purely gratuitous, it does not follow that God exacts no co-operation upon our part. He who would expect everything from God, without prayers or efforts, and who, whilst willing to outrage the Almighty by a sinful life, counts upon his salvation ; so far from possessing a Christian hope, would be guilty of a sinful presumption, by which he would offend the infinite goodness and holiness of God, and would commit a sin against the Holy Ghost.

Supposing that a person, without actually wishing to continue in his sin, were to profess his intention of

being converted at the hour of death, he would not, by such an act, be committing the sin of presuming upon God's mercy (a sin against the Holy Ghost), because he would simply be hoping for Divine mercy at the last moment ; and we are all of us obliged to hope for this, just as we are under the obligation of dying penitent.

But he would sin grievously, if he formally refused to be converted before the hour of his death ; nay, more than this, in reckoning with certainty upon a death-bed conversion, and, in leaving to an uncertain chance the great question of his eternal destiny, he would display utter recklessness, he would be carrying imprudence and folly to their utmost limits.

Almighty God, then, is always ready to show mercy to us, and He draws sinners to Himself ; but although He attracts sinners, they must, on their part, consent to go to Him ; although God offers his grace, sinners must accept it and must pray ; although God offers to grant pardon, He requires that sinners shall correspond to his advances, by showing sincerity of heart and a desire to use this liberty for the purpose of submitting to God and of obeying his laws.

On these conditions alone can we reckon on the mercy of God.

II.

Mary is our hope in the spiritual order.

God has given us in Mary a powerful mediatrix who, by her intercession, knows how to obtain for us from God the precise conditions just laid down ; but this presupposes that we pray to her with at least a wish to return to God at some future time, even if we lack the

courage to do so forthwith. This is why, with Holy Church, we salute Mary as our hope.

It is unquestionably true that the Blessed Virgin can do nothing without God; but she can obtain any and everything from God, because He loves her so much that He always grants whatsoever she asks. For her to ask is the same thing as to obtain; hence, men have given her a name which expresses at once her dependence and her unlimited power. *Omnipotentia supplex.* By the benign will of God Mary is permitted to do all that she wishes to do, as if she were an absolute Sovereign and Mistress.

What, then, is needed in order that she may become our hope and our safety? Nothing but the will to intercede with God on our behalf.

If she asks God to save me, I shall be sure of being saved. If, therefore, I pray to her with a sincere, though still a wicked heart, what more is required than her power, in order that, at my petition, she may intercede with God on my behalf?

One thing alone—her kindness.

Now to ask whether Mary is kind, is to ask whether the sun gives light, or whether honey is sweet.

Mary kind! Why, her kindness exceeds anything that we can imagine.

Is she not known as the kind Virgin, the good Mother? She is a Mother whose like the world has never yet seen and never will see. She is a thousand times more tender, more loving, more compassionate, more merciful, than all the mothers who have ever existed, or ever will exist. We must bear in mind, also, (whether we consider her as Mother or as Virgin,) that she is the masterpiece of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God.

Therefore, our good God loves Mary far more tenderly than He loves all other creatures put together, including even his angels and his saints.

Never could He refuse anything to his Mother, and further, since God has given to his Son, Jesus Christ, both judgment and power, all has, in a certain sense, fallen into the hands of Mary; for Jesus, Mary's Son and our Brother, has given over to his beloved Mother the treasures of his graces and his mercies.

How, then, can Jesus possibly refuse anything to his Mother? Has He not said that He came, not to abolish the law, but to fulfil it, so that not one iota should be neglected by Him? Is it not a law and commandment of God that a child shall honour his mother? This commandment Jesus undertook to keep always in his relations with his holy Mother. Let us reflect on what is going on every day in all the different quarters of the globe. When we have offended our Divine Saviour, and dread the just vengeance of Him who is to be our judge, we turn to his Blessed Mother. We look upon her as a mediatrix, as a merciful arbitrator, so to speak, between her two sons, Jesus and the poor sinner; and we hope that her Mother's tenderness may prevent the justice of her Son Jesus, our God and our Brother, from punishing us so severely and heavily as we deserve.

What can a kind Mother, such as Mary, do when placed between her two sons, Christ, the judge, and the suppliant sinner, who comes to her, and who also calls her Mother? She knows better than we do the guilt and ingratitude of her child who sins against Jesus she has ever before her mind the cruel sufferings which sinners caused Jesus to endure; but she sees also the abyss of hell opening to receive her unhappy child.

This child, of whom she became the Mother upon Calvary, at the price of sorrows great as is the ocean, she now hears crying to her in his distress: "Mother, save me!" Thereupon, with an indescribable blending of love for her Divine Son, and compassion for him who has offended and crucified Jesus afresh, she turns to her

Lord and her well-beloved Son, and with a look of ineffable love which goes straight to the Adorable Heart of our Blessed Redeemer, she entreats Him to show mercy. And if the Divine Justice seems inexorable, she becomes all the more importunate, and says: "Why, then, my Son and my God have you made me the Mother of mankind? Why did you mean me to love men as I loved you? Did you not foresee that they would offend you? Could I, as his Mother, see the son whom you have given me, on the point of falling into hell, and yet abandon him even while he is kneeling at my feet and calling me Mother? No! Jesus, my Son; you will not reject the humble petition of your own Mother. Spare me this poor sinner; he did not know how grievously he was offending you."

Could Jesus remain unmoved by the prayer of his Mother, the Mother who bore Him in her bosom, who nourished Him with her milk, who lived only for Him, who was a tender and faithful Mother to Him even to the very end, even when he hung bleeding on the tree of the cross?

Whoever thinks that He would refuse, knows nothing of Jesus and Mary.

Jesus never has rejected and never will reject his Mother's prayer. A word, a look from Mary, and all is granted.

And if any one were to doubt the truth of all this, to him is the saying of Jesus to his Apostles very applicable: *Adhuc et vos sine intellectu estis?*—"Are you also yet without understanding?"—Matt. xv. 16. Indeed he would have a very poor understanding, or rather it would be more correct to say, would be altogether void of understanding, who fails to realise the merciful design of Jesus when He gave us Mary to be our Mother, and crowned her Queen of Heaven. What had He in view but to give us a sweet and suppliant advocate with his Divine Heart, in order to pour forth

from that infinite source of goodness and pardon, all the riches of his mercy, through the irresistible intervention of his most pure and most beloved Mother.

Who, then, can despair, if with sincere and humble heart he lifts his eyes to the Blessed Virgin, and implores her maternal protection? You, whoever you may be who now read these lines, should you unhappily be in mortal sin, hasten to throw yourself at the feet of Mary, open your heart to her with its burden of misery, and you will at once see how good she is.

III.

Mary is also our hope in the temporal order

Let us now consider how Mary—all powerful with the Heart of Jesus, because of her love, and Queen of Heaven, gives solid security for our hope in her. God, by virtue of his promises, and on condition of our hoping in Him only, engages directly and absolutely to grant us heaven and the means of reaching it. But in giving us the Blessed Virgin He meant, through her, to open to us the treasury of his grace, provided only that what we ask for be not opposed to his glory, and to our own salvation. What, in fact, are the graces which we can obtain through Mary?

Mary is solicitous about our temporal as well as about our spiritual needs. Whilst we consider the wonders of Mary, which she is so continually manifesting to the world, may we not say that her Divine Son has given her so great power and so much glory only that she might lavish the treasures of heaven upon her poor children here on earth? What miseries and sufferings does she not alleviate when we invoke her. She, too,

like her Divine Son and by his power, gives sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, vigour to the paralysed ; she makes the cripple stand erect ; in a moment of time she restores health to those who were at the very gates of death.

A few years ago, in the north of France, according to the account given by a venerable priest of the country and by other reliable witnesses, there was a poor little cripple girl who could not walk without the aid of crutches, and who was anxious to make her First Communion. The day fixed upon was drawing near, and in order to make it a more memorable and happy epoch of the poor child's life, pretty clothes had been prepared and even her crutches were gaily ornamented. An accident which occurred during the ceremony served to increase the interest that all felt in her. The lighted torch which she was holding set fire to her veil ; but as a new veil was given her the little girl became comforted. Having received Jesus within her heart, she conceived a longing desire to pay a visit to the Mother of our Lord, in a chapel about half a league distant, where there was an altar dedicated to our Lady of la Salette.

Little did the child imagine the happy surprise with which Mary, in her maternal kindness, was about to reward this act of devotion. As she had walked the whole distance leaning on her crutches, the little cripple was very much fatigued when she reached the chapel ; but she was able to pour forth into Mary's ear some of the joy and gratitude with which her heart overflowed. When the time came to leave, she rose and left the shrine, wholly absorbed in pious devotion.

It was only when she had finished one half of her journey home, that she became aware of her having left her crutches in the chapel. While planning some mode of going to fetch them, the truth dawned upon her mind that she was completely cured. As for the

crutches, she left them in the chapel as an *ex voto* offering to the Mother of God.

But the world is dotted with sanctuaries in which the Blessed Virgin has worked numberless miracles. At Lourdes alone, the Church built in our own day, we are dazzled with the continual wonders wrought by her who appeared in that blessed spot, and called herself by the name of the Immaculate Conception. Do not even the waves of the ocean proclaim to the world the countless striking and loving interventions of Mary? On every sea the hymn, *Ave Maris Stella*—"Hail, Star of the Sea!" is chanted in homage to her who is Queen of the Ocean. The sailor, although too often unmindful of God and of his laws, does not forget Mary; and when the storm is lowering, when the winds are whistling, when the waves, carrying the vessel mountains high, hang it over the abyss, one cry, common to all the crew, is heard above the din of the tempest: *Ave Maris Stella*—"Hail, Star of the Sea!" Then Mary brings a calm upon the deep, and when the sailor reaches the port, he fulfils the vow made in the hour of danger, and hastens to the shrine of Mary.

During the year 1587, when the Dutch heretics were persecuting Catholics and confiscating their property, a certain mother who had lost everything else, but was resolved to preserve her faith, quitted Dordrecht and took up her abode at Antwerp with her little son. In a short time the small store of money she had brought with her was all spent, and she found herself reduced to a state of utter destitution.

The boy, who was about twelve years old, attended the free classes at the Jesuit College; he was truthful and full of intelligence, but hunger had made sad havoc with his feeble frame, and had left its mark upon his pale, wan face. One day, on returning from school, he threw his books upon his bed and then hurried to embrace his mother who, he noticed, was plunged in the deepest

sorrow. Claspings her boy in her arms, and pressing him to her bosom, she said amidst bitter sobs: "You had nothing to eat this morning, nor when you left the house, and now, at midday, I have not so much as a piece of bread to give you. Let us go back to Dordrecht; at any rate our relations will not let us die of starvation."

"No, no, mother," cried William. "Better for to die than to expose our faith to such a danger. We have given up all for God, and God certainly will never abandon us."

She answered him with reproaches, suggested by the wildness of her grief; one expression nearly broke his heart: "You wish then to see your mother dying of want!" Never before had the poor child known a harsh word to come from the lips of his loving parent; the tears started to his eyes, and leaving the house he hurried on his way to the chapel of the sodality, which was recently established in the college by the far-famed Father Coster. There, he told his grief to his Mother in Heaven, and begged her to come quickly to the aid of his unhappy earthly mother. For a long time he remained there weeping bitterly, but suddenly his tears ceased to flow, he rose and saluting with a radiant smile the image of Mary, went quickly out of the chapel. "Mother, mother," he cried, when he reached home, "cheer up, for help is coming soon."

"Help, my poor boy!—who is there here to help us?"

"I have been praying to the Blessed Virgin, mother, and she told me we should soon receive help."

"The Blessed Virgin told you so?"

"Yes, she did, indeed, in the sodality chapel."

The mother was startled; the unusual brightness of her boy's countenance surprised and troubled her. He was a child incapable, it is true, of telling a lie, but what if his troubled mind had led him into some de-

lusion? However, rays of joy were darting from the eyes of the holy youth, a heavenly peace shone forth from every feature.

She hastened to the college, and asked the rector if it were really true that the Blessed Virgin had spoken to her son.

Surprised at being asked such a question, the Father inquired carefully into the whole matter. When the lady had gone away, the strange incident was noised amongst the professors and students. These latter at once opened a subscription, in order to relieve the poor mother, so long as she should be in want, with the aid of a monthly allowance.

The Rector himself took the first instalment of money saying: "Here is the first portion of the help that Mary promised to your boy: you will receive the same amount every month." After saying this, he went back to the college, leaving the lady more astonished than ever.—*Garland of Mary.*

Some years ago, a missionary returning from the coast of Africa was exposed to so violent a storm that even the sailors declared they had never seen one so terrible. Suddenly the mast was carried away, and the sea swept everything from the deck, while the enormous waves dashed on every side against the vessel, filling everyone with consternation. At every moment the ship was expected to sink. The passengers were all upon the deck, and each one was occupied in fastening himself with a rope to something that might prevent his being washed overboard; the danger increased at every moment, and it was evident to all that the vessel was on the point of going to the bottom. At this terrible crisis, the missionary has recourse to the Queen of Heaven. "Friends," he cried, his voice being heard above the storm, "let us make a vow to Mary. Let us promise her solemnly to make a pilgrimage on foot, and communicate in her honour." As he spoke a furious

blast turned the vessel on her side, and all resigned themselves to death. But scarcely had the sailors received absolution and made their vow to Mary than the tempest began to abate. Three days later they came in sight of Bordeaux ; the vow was fulfilled, and the missionary exclaimed : “ Oh ! how great is the kindness of the Queen of Heaven towards her children.”

PRAYER.

Mary, my Mother, and—next to God—my hope ! am I not also exposed during the course of my whole life to the most terrible of all shipwrecks—the continual danger of being lost ? Is not this world a stormy sea, by which I may at any time be swallowed up and destroyed ? Ah, be to me from your bright heaven the Blessed Star of the Sea ! Without you, beloved Virgin, I shall be eternally shipwrecked, like so many who have never known you ; but with you I fear nothing. Preserve me, watch over me, lead me, like a good Mother, so that I may, through your powerful protection, have the happiness to reach some day the haven of eternal rest. Amen.

Ave Maria.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

EFFICACY OF RECOURSE TO MARY.

Ad te clamamus, exules filii Hevæ.

“To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.”

I.

The cry of a child of Mary.

We come now to the second half of the *Salve Regina*. The first part has been consecrated to the praise and glory of the Queen of Heaven; in the second we implore her protection. Our Lord has followed the very same method in the prayer which he has Himself taught us. In the “Our Father,” because the essential end of all creatures is the glory of God, we ask of our Father in heaven, first, that his name may be glorified, that his kingdom may triumph, and that every free-will may be subjected to his adorable will. Only after God’s interests we think of our own, in order to implore of his infinite goodness those graces which are necessary for us in both the spiritual and temporal order. It is the same in the *Ave Maria*. In this prayer, the Church begins with the Angel, by praising Mary, and ends with the supplication which the Council of Ephesus addressed to the Mother of God.

Thus, too, in the *Salve Regina*, raising our eyes to Mary’s throne, and enraptured by the sight of her

glory, we salute her with joy and with love as the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of Mercy. But whilst she reveals herself to us in unspeakable splendour, as our life, our sweetness, and our hope, we realise our own miseries and, seeing that she is so good and so powerful, we utter a cry to her—a cry of sadness but still of confidence. *Ad te clamamus. Ad te*, to you; it is an impulse arising from confidence. The source of hope is opened, it bursts forth, and flows strongly and powerfully to the throne of Mary. It is not a simple prayer which the heart addresses to the Mother of God; it is a holy assault which confidence and love cause to be irresistible.

We have studied the place which Mary occupies in God's infinitely merciful plan of our redemption. We have seen that Mary is great indeed; the Queen of Heaven and Earth; but her kindness is her irresistible charm; and though she has become great, it is in order that, according to the purpose of the fatherly providence of God, she should prove her goodness in regard to her poor children here below, and, setting them free from the bondage of their miseries and their exile, should draw their hearts to heaven.

II.

The power of recourse to God through Mary.

To you our cries arise. To you! Let us meditate upon this expression. Why should we address Mary in preference to all the angels and saints, in preference to all creatures, and, in a certain sense, in preference to God Himself?

To whom, pray, after God, should we have recourse if not to Mary?

We repose unbounded confidence in a father or a mother.

But has Mary no relationship with us? Is she not united to us in an order far higher; in an order beyond all measure more intimate; in the order of the spiritual world; by the sweetest and holiest ties? Is not Mary our Mother? Is not her Divine Son our Father, no less than our Creator? As Redeemer, is He not our Saviour? As man, is He not our Brother?

And if so many ties unite us to your Son, Blessed Virgin, to whom should we have recourse in all the miseries which assail us, if not to you, who are his Mother and our Mother? And who is there to whom we can so confidently pour out our hearts' petitions as to you? If we could not seek refuge in your arms, and count upon your Mother's love, when we have incurred the wrath of God, what would become of us? And if, dear Mother, we failed to call for your help with our cries of distress, what would you say? Most certainly you would say: "Do you then not know me? Am I no longer your Mother?"

Yes! Mary! you are our Mother, and it is your duty, as our Mother, to regulate all our dealings with our Heavenly Father. God well knows that it is the mother's love which wins the confidence of the children in a family; that it is the mother's heart which ever pleads with justice to give way to mercy. And for this very reason, O Blessed Virgin! God made you Mother of the great Christian family, and gave to you, the glorious Queen of Paradise, no other office than that of showing kindness and mercy to the children of men.

Oh, the goodness of God! How wondrous is He in the riches of his charity and in the devices of his love!

How comes it to happen that there are hearts which do not bless Him a thousand and a thousand times, for having given us a Mother such as Mary is, the Mother of his own and only-begotten Son?

They who approach an earthly queen, in order to

implore her protection, are never sure of the manner in which they will be received. It is not thus with the glorious and ever-loving Queen of Paradise. It is with a radiant smile, with a heart filled with love, that she always receives those who go to her; and, if sometimes she addresses at first a maternal reproach to some hardened sinner, it is only that he may feel the greatness of his guilt, and that he may be brought to the dispositions which are necessary before receiving pardon. Soon, however, she smiles upon him, and after bringing him back to the grace of God, she loves him as a mother loves the child she has just saved from ruin. And in very truth it is quite certain that we often obtain through Mary favours which we might fail to obtain were we to address ourselves to God directly. "It may happen," says St. Anselm, "that salvation comes to us more promptly by invoking the name of Mary than by invoking the name of Jesus.—*De Ecclesia*. V, cap. 6.

Is Mary, then, kinder or more powerful than Jesus? No! a thousand times, no! for Jesus is Infinite Goodness and Power, and it is by Him that Mary is all that she is, and without Him she can do nothing and would have no power whatsoever. But as Jesus is our Judge as well as as our Saviour, it might be that, in addressing our prayer to Him, we should not have all the confidence requisite for the answering of our petitions; whereas, knowing that Mary has no other office than that of kindness and mercy, we go to her with a boundless confidence.

On the other hand, Jesus is a Son who loves his Mother with an incomparable love; hence, it pleases Him to prove how much He loves and honours her by communicating to her, so to speak, his omnipotence, and by granting all her desires.

Thus we read, in the revelations of St. Bridget, that one day the Saint heard Jesus say to his Mother: "You never make me a request which I do not grant, and all

those who entreat my mercy through you shall obtain it, if they have the will to amend."

Further, when from the cross Jesus appointed Mary to be our Mother, He worked in her exactly all that his words signified; He put into her heart, with reference to us, all the feelings which a mother experiences towards a child; and as He had the power to do so, He gave Mary authority to do for us all that the most loving and most merciful of mothers could desire to do, rather than actually be able to do. How could He, indeed, have done otherwise, when at that very time He was pouring out all his blood, and at the point of death, in order that He might save us.

Not only does Mary work prodigies of grace, even on behalf of the most guilty, but she asks so little on our part in order to conciliate her favour. How many sinners are indebted to her for their conversion, because they have kept up the habit of saying every day a single Hail Mary or even for having once recited the *Memorare*.

When the Reign of Terror was at its worst; when the revolutionary tribunal was sending so many innocent victims to the scaffold, there was a woman, or, more correctly, a female fury, who was accustomed to follow the condemned from their prison to the scaffold, vomiting against them on the way the foulest abuse and the coarsest insults: outrages which were redoubled when the victims were distinguished by their religious feeling. One day when the executioner's cart was conveying Monseigneur Raclot to his death, this wretched creature followed behind and gave utterance to even filthier abuse and grosser blasphemy than ever. When the prelate arrived at the scaffold, he turned towards her, saying in a calm and gentle manner: "Madam, I beg you to pray for me." The woman stood motionless as though stupified, and struck by such an example of profound peace and sublime dignity, she answered: "Pray for you? What, I pray for you?"

"Yes, madam, I ask you to recite only one single Hail Mary for my soul, which is so soon to appear before God."

It was as if a thunderbolt had fallen upon the woman, and dropping on her knees near the scaffold, in sight of the astonished crowd, she said the Hail Mary in a loud voice. Then rising, she stole away from the throng, speechless and bathed in tears, and after having spent three days in deploring her sinful life, she became converted, and from that time the regularity of her behaviour and her devotion to Mary gave as great edification to the city as her former career had given scandal.

Thus, when there seems no hope; when the darkness of death and hell appears to have completely triumphed, a prayer ascends to the throne of the Queen of Heaven, and the thrice blessed morning star begins to pierce the blackness of the night, and the sinner is saved who had resolved to allow his soul to fall into perdition.

St. Alphonsus and other reliable authors have recounted cases in which Mary has delayed the sentence of damnation, in order to call back to life, and convert those who had died in a state of mortal sin, but had kept up devotion to her, the Mother of Mercy. The annals of the Order of St. Dominic relate that a favour of this kind was vouchsafed to a lay brother of this Order, because, notwithstanding the violation of his vow of poverty, he had persevered in the daily recitation of the Rosary.

Nor need we be too greatly astonished at these marvels of kindness and power; for, as Origen says, when Mary asks a favour, Jesus looks upon her supplication as if it were the command of a mother.

"Nothing can resist your power," are words which St. Gregory of Nicomedia addresses to Mary, "and nothing can stay your clemency when you bring to

mind the multitude of our sins ; for the Creator of all things sees in your glory his own glory . . . and your Son seems to consider that He is paying a debt which He has contracted, when He answers your prayers." From all this we may conclude, with the wise Idiota, that our happiness and our salvation are both in the hands of Mary.

III.

The immeasurable superiority of Mary's intercession over that of the other Saints.

One question remains, the answer to which will present no difficulty. Why is our prayer addressed more frequently to Mary than to the other saints in heaven ? Why do we prefer that our cries of distress shall ascend to the throne of this august Virgin ?—*Ad te clamamus*. "To thee do we cry." The answer is simple enough. Mary is the Queen of all the Saints ; she is more powerful, more benign, more merciful, than all the saints in heaven. And besides, as we have just explained, Jesus considers Himself indebted to her. She is his Mother, she ever has been the most devoted of Mothers.

But, you will ask, may we not make an exception in favour of the holy St. Joseph ? And if he is incomparably inferior to Mary, because he was not the true Father of Christ, did not Jesus give the name of Father to him whose whole life was one continual sacrifice ?

Far be it from me to refute a line of argument which gives glory to St. Joseph, and to deny that Jesus is also under some obligation to this dear saint ; an obligation of a kind which causes the Son of God to refuse nothing

to one whom He loved most tenderly as if he were a real father. Surely, no one can be mad enough to believe that God Almighty would have allowed the holy Mother of his Son to be married to a spouse unworthy of her, much less have himself given St Joseph to her!

But although Joseph was worthy of Mary, he is not on an equality with her, and this great Saint—the greatest of all the saints in heaven, according to Suarez, after his holy Spouse—acknowledges and venerates the exceptional and unequalled greatness of the Mother of God.

St. Bridget saw once, in an ecstasy, the heavens opened, and the saints encircling our Lady's throne, and she heard them saying to their Queen: "Oh! blessed Lady! you bore within you the Lord of all the world, and you are yourself the Mistress of all creation. What is there impossible to you, since all that you desire is immediately granted?"

Let us now ponder on another characteristic of the power of Mary, which explains even more clearly why men address themselves to her so continually. Whereas the saints are powerful with God, each in his own particular line of grace, the Blessed Virgin possesses the fulness of all grace, and her benign power is universal; universal as well in regard to the recipients as to the persons on whom she bestows favours, and universal as to the favours themselves which she obtains. St. Aloysius is the patron of youth, but Mary is the patroness of young and old alike. We invoke some particular saint in order to obtain some special grace which we desire, but Mary has been made the repository of all favours, all benefits, and every sort of blessing. She is the sure refuge and hope of all the miserable, of all sinners, and of all abandoned outcasts; and all those who know her go to her as to a mother, while although she is so mighty she deals with

them as the most tender and condescending of mothers. Words cannot describe the familiarity of her motherly love towards some of her most favoured children. What a touching picture is that of the kind Virgin when she left heaven to come to the side of the young St. Edward of England, to help him to mend his hair-shirt! Or when she came one night to the bedside of her beloved son Joseph Herman, after he had been bled, in order that with her own maternal hands she might arrange the bandages that had become displaced, and stop the flow of blood from the wound.

One more example—a fact which happened recently and is well known in France—of Mary's tenderness towards a young pupil of one of the Jesuit Colleges.

The child was by birth a Pole, and was living with his father in a foreign town while engaged in the pursuit of his studies. His mother had been banished to Siberia, and it was impossible to obtain any news of her; it was not even certain that she had not died in her cruel exile.

The poor little boy had no remembrance of her, but he loved her, and all the more tenderly because he knew her to be most unhappy.

Two months before he was to make his First Communion he began to hope against all hope that his mother might be brought back from Siberia by the Blessed Virgin, in time for that eventful day of his young life. His confessor had told him that Mary never refuses anything which is asked of her with confidence. These words inspired him with the thought and confidence which does violence to Heaven, and he prayed most earnestly every day to the Blessed Virgin.

Upon the morning of the eve of his First Communion, the child was confidently expecting his mother's arrival: he kept close watch upon the movements of the Brother who acted as porter, for he felt sure that he would have to summon him to the parlour. Evening came; the

father arrived for the customary little ceremony of the pardon;* but alas! came unaccompanied. Embracing his son tenderly, the Count bade him pray earnestly for his absent mother. The scene was most touching, father and child were weeping in each other's arms; and so the day which is so blessed and full of joy to a child, to a father, to a mother, was, after all, to be darkened by this heavy cloud.

The boy, who up to that time was so happy in his hope, now grew sad, but still he did not lose his confidence in the Queen of Heaven.

Nine o'clock struck; and as he passed by the parlour on his way to the dormitory, he looked in with tearful eyes, but it was quite empty.

At length then he gave up all hope. Kneeling at his bedside, the poor child burst into tears, and complained to the Blessed Virgin in the most heart-rending manner. The other boys were all in bed, but he stayed up, and wept and prayed. Suddenly the door of the dormitory opened, and one of the Fathers came to the cubicle of the young boy. "My child," he said, "some one wants you in the parlour."

The boy, wild with excitement, ran down stairs; a poor woman clad in the rags she had worn in Siberia, was waiting in the parlour, and as soon as the door opened she clasped the child in her arms: it was the mother for whose coming he had prayed!

Who will say, after this, that we are not right in importuning Mary with our prayers!

* This is a little custom which is practised in France and Belgium on the eve of the First Communion. The child begs pardon for all the trouble it has given to its parents, and receives their forgiveness. It serves to mark the day and show a sincere desire, on the part of the child, to begin a new life.

PRAYER.

O Mary, blessed ark of safety, what a wondrous gift, indeed, was that which Jesus made to me when from his cross He addressed me in the person of St. John with the words: "Behold thy Mother." It was the last gift of that Heart broken by grief; the last blessing pronounced over me before giving me his life! I beseech you, then, to offer a thousand thanks for me to that Divine Heart, which you gave to me a poor sinner in order that you might save me. And do you, O my loving Mother! preserve within me a great love for you, for as long as I love you I am in no danger of being lost; and I feel full of confidence in you, since although I do not love you as much as I ought, I am sure that I have at least a real love for you. Yes, you will save me; you who are the Mother of Mercy and the Refuge of sinners, and during all eternity I shall love you as my deliverer and my Mother.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE QUALITIES THAT ARE REQUISITE IN THE PRAYERS
WE ADDRESS TO MARY.

Ad te clamamus.

“To thee do we cry.”

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I.

Whoever prays to the Queen of Heaven will be saved.

If we hear of some privileged person who has received from the Blessed Virgin an assurance of salvation, we feel a pious envy, and say, “Ah! if only we knew that we should be saved, surely from this time forth all sacrifices would become light. I should make little account of the troubles of this life.” “Very well,” answers the author of the *Imitation of Christ*; “do now what you would then do; live holily and you will infallibly be saved.” There is, however, another answer. It is within your power to be undoubtedly saved, and, without any revelation, and while you are still living, you may have a certain sign that you will go to heaven. This sign depends on yourself; it is that you have filial devotion towards the Blessed Virgin, and that you persevere in it until death.

Does not this consoling assurance follow as the necessary consequence of yesterday’s meditation?

Nothing is wanting on the part of Mary, for she both can save you and wishes to save you.

But she will not, any more than God, save you independently of yourself; she requires your co-operation, she wishes you to go to her with a true devotion, and that praying to her, you should entreat her to secure your salvation. At this price she will obtain from her Son for you, those necessary and efficacious graces by which you will be saved. Is this asking too much of you? Upon this condition she will be for you, as for millions of others, the "Gate of Heaven;" *since no servant of Mary shall ever perish.*

Therefore, it follows that it is all-important to pray earnestly to the Blessed Virgin, since our eternity may possibly hang upon the supplications we address to her.

That no prayer which is properly made, will ever fail to receive its answer, is a truth which springs from those words of Jesus Christ: "Ask and you shall receive." It would be an insult offered to the kindness of Mary, to think that this promise does not extend to the prayers which are addressed, through her, to the Divine Majesty.

II.

Prayer, in order to be efficacious, must be the cry of the needy.

The Psalmist had of old taught us the assured efficacy of prayer when inviting us to pray. *Accedite ad eum et illuminamini, et facies vestrae non confundentur.* "Come ye to Him and be enlightened; and your faces shall not be confounded."—Ps. xxxiii. In the verse directly following this we see who those are who have

been helped and have not been put to confusion. They are the poor, whose voices have been lifted up to heaven. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him; and saved him out of all his troubles."—Ps. xxxiii. 7. And in another Psalm he says: *Desiderium pauperum exaudivit Dominus*.—"The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor."—Ps. ix. 17.

"The desire of the poor;" those are the words which insure the infallible efficacy of prayer—of that which we address to Mary, as well as that which we address to God. The Queen of Heaven, the great almoner of Paradise, enriched as she is with the inexhaustible treasures of her Divine Son, desires nothing so much as to dispense them to the poor. But we must go to her with a full conviction and deep feeling of our poverty and our misery. It is for this reason that, in the *Salve Regina*, having exalted the glory, the riches, the power, the kindness, and the mercy of Mary, we cry to her for aid. Our prayer must be a cry. A cry is a prayer, but a prayer, which bursts from the heart, full of fire and power; and this cry must come from the needy. It is the cry which resounds throughout the rest of the prayer we are now meditating.

What then is the prayer of the poor which God and the Blessed Virgin always answer? First, he prays with a profound sense of his misery: he is humble. Secondly, he prays with the firm hope that the rich and generous Queen of Heaven will obtain for him from God everything that he asks for: he is full of confidence. Thirdly, he has an ardent desire to be assisted: his prayer is a heartfelt cry. We have here the three essential qualities of prayer, humility, confidence, and desire.

III.

Humility, the first condition of efficacious prayer.

Prayer must be humble. It must come from the heart of the poor; that is, from a heart which does not deceive itself, but recognises its own neediness and utter misery. Jesus made this clear in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The former stood erect in the temple in the attitude of a man who has no petition to make, and who is self-satisfied and self-sufficient in his pride. He believed that he was perfect in every virtue, and contented himself with returning thanks to God and to himself, that he was better than others; especially that he was not like the poor Publican behind him.

The Publican, on the contrary, had remained near the entrance of the temple, and hardly dared to lift his eyes from the ground, so abashed was he, and crushed with a profound sense of his miseries and sins; and striking his breast, he cried: "O God, be merciful unto me a sinner."—Luke, xviii. 20. What, then, was the result of these two prayers? The Pharisee, who fancied that he needed nothing, went out just as he had come in. The Publican, on the other hand, when he left the temple, was a sinner no longer. God had pardoned him, because he had humbled himself, and had changed him, from a sinner into one of the just. The prayer of the Pharisee was the prayer of the rich, that of the Publican was the prayer of the poor.

The needy who pray are humble as regards themselves and reverent as regards God. The two essentials of the prayer of the poor, that is to say of all good and earnest prayers, are humility and reverence. We do not realise this fact sufficiently, and too frequently, indeed, seem to attach very little if any importance to it. We

set about beginning our prayers without preparing the soul to address God, without trying to become penetrated with a sense of our nothingness and our misery, without abasing ourselves before the Infinite God, to whom we are about to speak.

This is to tempt God; when He is not revered, He is not moved. "Before prayer prepare thy soul; and be not as a man that tempteth God."—Eccli. xviii. 23. And, in truth, is it not to tempt God, if we expect to be answered by Him without humbling ourselves before Him? The real point of importance then is, to humble ourselves within our own hearts, and to feel a profound reverence for God. In the whole of the Sacred Scriptures, which is the book of God, and throughout the Catholic Liturgy, which is the book of the Church, there is not one prayer which is not based upon this humility and upon this reverence.

Now, the prayers which we address to Mary must rest upon the same foundation. And what, indeed, is the *Salve Regina* but a powerful and fervid prayer, in which we bow low before the majesty of the Queen of Heaven, and in which we lay bare before the Mother of Mercy all the extent of our misery? The *Ave Maria* is, likewise, a perfect expression of the same sentiments.

But in this matter the Blessed Virgin has herself become our model: she who is so holy, so rich in grace: "God hath regarded the humility of his handmaid," she said to St. Elizabeth: *Respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ*—Luke, i. 48. She was perfectly well aware, of course, that the angel had saluted her as "full of grace," but in that admirable light which inundated her immaculate soul, she saw and acknowledged that, of herself, she was nothing, and that any good that might be in her came from God and belonged to God.

IV.

Confidence : the second condition of efficacious prayer.

Prayer must be confident. A poor man would never approach a rich one, if he was certain beforehand that he would receive nothing. When he begs from a wealthy person, he does not know whether he will receive alms, but he hopes that he will and that suffices. We, on the contrary, are assured by the infallible promise of Jesus Christ that God will answer us ; we know that, to be bound to his word, God must require us to believe unhesitatingly in the efficacy of our prayer.

“ If any of you want wisdom,” St. James tells us, “ let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not : and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.”—James, i. 5, 6, 7.

An unwavering confidence is all-powerful with the Heart of God, because it is an homage paid to that perfection in which He has chiefly shown his glory and his goodness.

Therefore, the efficacy of our prayer is in proportion to the degree of our confidence.

Confidence may be fitly compared to the string of a bow ; if the cord is loose, the arrow will fall to the ground midway in its career ; if it is strongly strung, then will the arrow fly swiftly to its mark.

It is our confidence which forces God to fulfil his promise. “ Ask and you shall receive.—John, xvi. 24.

Let us not, however, forget that no prayer can be without its fruit, small and weak though may be the prayer. Moreover, let us not forget that if God, or if

the Blessed Virgin do not grant us the temporal favours we ask, it is because they know such favours would be prejudicial to the Divine Glory, and, consequently, to our own real good. In that case, God substitutes in the place of what we wanted to get, some vastly more precious favour, which often will remain unknown to us until after our death.

Our prayers, then, must be animated by confidence. Nothing pleases Mary so much as the assurance with which we implore favours of her, and we may say that, of all the marvels worked at Lourdes by the Immaculate Virgin, there is not one which has not been extorted by this firm confidence.

It would be impossible to describe how much this confidence pleases God and the Blessed Virgin, above all when firmness is joined to simplicity, the childlike simplicity which has such power with our Lord,.

How well was this spirit of simple candour understood by a holy and well-known preacher, (the Père Lejeune) when, in speaking of Jesus in the crib, he made use of these words: "Devout hearers, let us address ourselves to Jesus! It is true that we have deeply grieved Him, but He has made Himself a little child, and as such is easily appeased. The angel announced that He is born to be our Saviour, not our Judge. Those little hands are too small to hold the thunderbolt with which to punish our guilt; and even could he grasp it He could not make use of it, for those little arms are wrapped in the swathing bands; and even could He handle the thunderbolt, his Mother is too near Him: He would be frightened of alarming her. See how sweetly He is smiling from her virginal bosom, how He unfolds his little arms desiring to embrace us. Who could refuse anything to that Divine embrace? If his little feet were strong enough, He would escape from his Mother's lap and hasten to give us the kiss of peace." "Let us go, therefore," as the Scripture says, "with

confidence to the throne of grace.”—Heb. iv. 16. Here, indeed, we have a true picture of Jesus in the arms of Mary.

V.

Ardent desire: the third condition of efficacious prayer.

Prayer must be animated by an ardent desire; it must be a cry from the heart. Thus, in the *Salve Regina* we do not say to the Blessed Virgin: “To thee do we pray;” but “To thee do we cry.”

Our prayer is the cry of distress from the midst of the sufferings which press so heavily upon us, and the dangers which threaten us on every side of losing our immortal souls. If, in answer to her child’s cry, a mother runs to it in wild dismay, what must not our Heavenly Mother feel, when the cries of her earthly children reach her ears and strike her heart.

Now, a cry is the most lively expression of an appeal for help; it is, therefore, the most powerful expression of prayer. The Holy Spirit often refers to this kind of prayer, which He delights in answering. For example: *Iste pauper clamavit et Dominus exaudivit eum.*—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.”—Ps. xxxiii. 7. *Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi.*—“I cried to the Lord with my voice.”—Ps. cxli. 1. *Si clamaverit ad me exaudiam eum, quia misericors sum.*—“If he cry to me I will hear him, because I am compassionate.”—Exod. xxii. 27. *De profundis clamavi ad te Domine.*—“Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord.”—Ps. cxxix. 1. A word spoken may reach our ears, yet fail to awaken our attention, but a cry arrests our notice, and forces us to give it heed. The cry of our prayer is one and the same thing with the most earnest expression of our heart’s need. Now an earnest desire

always touches the heart of God, Saint Augustine tells us. *Desiderium in auribus Dei vehemens clamor.*—"A fervid desire is as a loud cry in the ears of God."

Here is an example of a prayer which was a true cry of the heart:

On the 4th December, 1733, in the house of a poor artisan at Metz, a child was born. He received, in baptism, the name of Nicholas. From his earliest years he showed such signs of piety that no one could help believing that God must have some special designs in his regard. The father resolved that the boy should receive a good education, and confided him first of all to the care of a neighbouring parish priest.

At the end of twelve months, the young Nicholas was transferred to the college of the Jesuits, taking his place in one of the lowest classes. It soon became evident that his talents were not so precocious as his piety. In spite of his steady application, he was always last in his class, and so when the end of the year was at hand, his master, coming to the conclusion that he would never make any progress at his books, recommended the father to take him home and put him to some trade.

It was a terrible disappointment to the father, to be obliged to renounce his most cherished hopes, and he could not help thinking that with perseverance, Nicholas might eventually succeed. So he sent his son, during the vacation, to study with his former master, and when the Jesuit College was re-opened, asked for, and obtained another trial, being told that his son might remain in the same class for another three months. All seemed in vain! The three months were drawing to a close, and no progress was visible; the poor child was on the point of being obliged to leave the college, and to renounce what he had always looked upon as his vocation.

It was a fortunate thing for him that he had a pious

mother, full of faith, and not disposed to believe that all is lost when human efforts fail.

Upon the morning of the day when Nicholas had to write a composition, which was to be, absolutely, the very last test, and which excluded all hope if he failed, this good mother took the boy with her to the Church of the Celestines, to visit an altar of Mary which was held in great devotion by the people, and before which she had many a time already received help and consolation.

Their prayers were very fervent that day, and Mary, who is never invoked in vain, listened to their supplications. The child rose from his knees inspired with new confidence, went to the college, wrote his composition, and, contrary to the expectation of everybody, came out first in his class. From that day the cross which was the decoration worn by the victors, was always to be seen on his breast until, after always occupying the first place in every succeeding class, he left the college holding the first place in the School of Rhetoric.

This visible mark of Mary's protection, this aid afforded in the moment of his sore need, served to strengthen his vocation, and laid the foundations of the deepest and most solid piety.

This little dullard, this lad who had once been always the last in his class, became, in the Society of Jesus, Père Beauregard, whose name recalls the memory of one of the most celebrated orators of the eighteenth century.—*Garland of Mary.*

When we wish to obtain temporal favours or bodily cures, when we want to avert some misfortune, we have no difficulty in crying out with fervour, and in offering up the most earnest petitions. But very rarely do we do this when there is a question of obtaining spiritual graces; and yet these are infinitely more precious, and on them our eternity may often depend.

A mother will utter many a cry of sorrow when praying for the child who is in danger of death; we are

far from condemning her maternal love. But if that child should fall into mortal sin, and by rebelling against God incur the risk of damnation, she would, perhaps, offer no prayer to heaven; on the contrary, how many parents are there who, themselves, willingly expose their children to the danger of sin, and of becoming corrupted, by allowing them to read bad books, by letting them go to all sorts of places of amusements, and by otherwise neglecting to watch over them. A young man will pray earnestly that he may pass successfully some examination, but infatuated with some passion he will grudgingly say a hurried prayer to the Blessed Virgin in order to obtain deliverance from some sinful habit which, if not corrected, will certainly plunge him into eternal misery. Is it, then, to be wondered at if the sick child dies? or if the young man fails, his mind weakened by the practice of vice?

Did not our Blessed Lord say: "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you?"—Matt. vi. 33.

VI.

Concerning long prayers.

But even amongst those who pray for their soul's welfare, how few there are whose prayer is a cry to God! They pray; that is, they say a number of prayers, but without reverence, without desire, without heart. A great deal of time is passed in this kind of prayer, and what is the result? They grow weary, they get a distaste for prayer; they allow the mind to wander on every kind of thought; they are irreverent, and thus remain as far as ever from arriving at union with God. It is of such lengthy and mechanical

prayers that Jesus Christ spoke the words: *Orantes autem nolite multum loqui*.—"And when you are praying, speak not much."—Matt. vi. 7.

And again, when speaking of the Pharisees, who thought nothing of sins against charity, because they recited long prayers, He said that, while making long prayers, they "devoured widows' houses," but that on account of saying longer prayers than others they should have longer punishment than others. *Qui devorant domos viduarum sub prætextu proluxæ orationis: sic accipient prolixius judicium*.—Mark, xii. 40.

Here we see that our Lord condemns two classes of persons; first, those who because they have recited long formal prayers, or passed long hours in Church, consider that piety consists in outward forms of religion, and allow themselves immediately after to slander, to calumniate, to ill-treat and destroy the peace of their neighbours; and, secondly, He condemns those who say long prayers without attention, without reverence, without earnestness, and who, therefore, do not really converse with God, that is, do not truly pray. It does not follow that Jesus speaks in condemnation of those who, in fulfilling the duties of their state of life, pray often and for a long time together; for God has said in Holy Scripture: *Non impediatis orare semper*.—"Let nothing hinder thee from praying always."—Eccli. xviii. 22. And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, says: *Sine intermissione orate*.—"Pray without ceasing."—1 Thess. v. 17. That is, pray effectually; make a prayer of your work, by doing it as in God's presence, and with the intention of giving Him glory. Finally, our Lord has impressed on us the necessity of a constant and persevering prayer, when He says on the one hand: *Sine me nihil potestis facere*.—"Without me you can do nothing:"—John, xv. 5; and on the other hand: *Oportet semper orare et non deficere*.—"We ought always to pray and not to faint"—Luke, xviii. 1.

Prayer is like an arrow which is aimed at the heavens. Place an arrow in the hands of an effete and lazy man, it will fall to the ground when it has travelled over a few paces; but if it is shot by the hand of a strong and skilful archer it will fly straight to its mark. A rosary recited carelessly and for mere form's sake, leaves the heart cold; but when said with reverence and love, it will light up a fire of devotion, and will delight the heart of Mary by its affectionate praises and fervid petitions.

Here is an example of fervent and trustful prayer, which our Lady of Lourdes rewarded by a striking cure.

Emma Kinds was born at Pitthem, and lived in the Convent of Spermalia at Bruges. She was attacked during the month of May, 1882, by an affection of the eyes, which became so serious as to threaten her with total blindness. The doctors who were consulted, declared that there was but very slight hope of her ever being cured. For eight days she had not been able to see anything, and her eyes, darksome and fixed, seemed to have lost for ever all power of seeing or receiving any kind of impression. It was high time to have recourse to the supernatural power of grace.

Upon Monday, the 26th June, the sufferer visited the Sanctuary of the Virgin at Oostacker, having, for several days previously, recommended her case to our Lady of Lourdes in earnest prayer.

She was accompanied by her sister, her brother, and a charitable lady. No one, perhaps, ever felt more unbounded confidence in the goodness and power of her Heavenly Mother.

Upon the eve of her departure, when, with tears in their eyes, the brother and sister were condoling with her in so great a misfortune, she turned to them and began to console them, saying: "Do not grieve any longer. Tomorrow I shall be cured."

Supported by her lively faith, the maiden left Bruges, at eight o'clock, suffering much on the journey from a wound in her back, which the physicians had made in the hope of affording some relief to her eyes. For a few moments, indeed, so violent did the pain become, she was quite unconscious, having fainted away. On arriving at Ghent, the four pilgrims left the train, and reached the grotto of Oostacker on foot. It was a painful walk for the poor sufferer, but hope made everything easy to her.

They found, on gaining the shrine, that an immense crowd had gathered around the miraculous statue. It was composed, in great part, of the members of a congregation at Bruges, and of the orphan girls from an institute at Antwerp. Led by her sister, the blind young lady took her place in their midst, and began to make her petition to Mary Immaculate.

Two eyes of wax were placed at the Virgin's feet, and a bouquet of flowers which they intended to offer, if the cure was effected, was kept in reserve. Having walked twice round the grotto, praying, the sufferer felt that the moment of grace was near at hand. Suddenly her whole body became violently agitated; her limbs trembled. "Lead me to the fountain," she said, "let me wash my face in it, and I shall be cured."

Her directions were obeyed; she was led to the fountain, and in a moment the disease was cured which had baffled all the skill of the physicians for fully two months.

At the first application of the miraculous water, the girl felt that her eyes had recovered some power, and the light of day seemed to her like the evening twilight. The second application completed the cure, and in a rapture of joy and gratitude she cried aloud: "I can see; I see the statue of Mary! I can see you all. O pray for me and let us all give thanks to God and the Blessed Virgin." The assembled crowd was as-

tounded. They had seen the girl led by the hand to the grotto, and now she was walking without the help of a guide, like anyone else ; her eyes were bright and clear. All who were present could testify to the cure.

When the curiosity of the bystanders had been satisfied, the *Magnificat* was sung in thanksgiving. Emma Kinds returned to Bruges that evening, beaming with joy, with hersight perfectly restored. The Blessed Virgin had even removed all traces of her previous suffering, for the very wound in her back, which had given her so much pain during the morning's journey, had altogether disappeared by the time she reached home, leaving only a slight scar to show where it had once been.—*Garland of Mary.*

PRAYER.

O Mary, vessel of singular devotion ! never permit me to pray without reverence, without desire, without love. Let me be thoroughly impressed when I pray, with a great reverence for the Divine Majesty, and a profound sense of my own misery. Enkindle within my heart an ardent desire for those spiritual gifts, which are the only solid and lasting possessions. And as it is a mother's office to teach her children to pray, do you, who are my Mother, instruct me in prayer, which is the key of heaven, and by which I shall persevere in grace until the day of my death.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

THIS EARTH IS A PLACE OF EXILE.

Ad te clamamus, exules.

“To thee do we cry, poor banished children.”

I.

*We do not realise either the misfortunes or the consolations
of exile.*

When a person in misfortune appeals for help, he puts forward his claims to compassion; and as he feels his sufferings acutely, he knows how to find words calculated to awaken pity.

It is in this same way that we poor exiles here below, put forward our claims to the maternal pity of our Mother who reigns in heaven.

“To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.”

If a man who had been for a long time cast upon a desert island were to perceive a vessel approaching, with what haste would he not run to the shore? And so soon as the ship should be within sound of his voice, how earnestly and with what soul-stirring words would he not appeal to the passengers for rescue?

Who would be so hard-hearted as to pass by without pity, and turn a deaf ear to the cries of such distress? Surely no one would abandon to his fate on that desert island, one whom the tempest had driven there, far from country, friends, and relations; far from brothers, father, and mother!

That wretched man is each one of us ; like him we are in exile ; but we are even more unfortunate than he is.

Yet, how far are we from appreciating the full extent of our misfortune ! Born even, in a land of exile, without ever having known the joys of home and family, our fatherland, the love of a father, and the tenderness of a mother, we are ignorant of all other places except this place of our banishment. Heaven, our true country, is unknown to us. Our Mother is the Queen of that Heaven, and yet, we have never seen the loving glance of her eye rest upon us.

We might even go so far as to say that we do not know who we are ; and that we are as ignorant of our divine origin as of our noble destiny.

Many there are who think that they have been born for this world alone, and that this earth is their true country ; but they are not what they take themselves to be. Raise your eyes, O men, to heaven, and look at that eternal throne, bright with measureless glory. That is the throne of Him whom the angels adore in trembling ; those angels are your brothers, and He, whom they adore, is your Father ; for when He created you in his own image, and when He breathed into you the breath of his Divine life, He said to each one of you : "Thou art my son," and He bade you reply : "My Father." The earth is for you no more than a place of waiting ; soon, and for ever, you will be with your Father, and your country will be the Kingdom of Heaven ! There you will meet your Mother, the Queen of Paradise ; there she awaits you, surrounded by your brethren in countless numbers, who will come to meet you at the entrance of that heavenly dwelling, and welcome you to share eternally their glory and their happiness !

We know these beautiful and consoling truths, but we do not feel them ; they make scarcely any impression

on us, because they do not strike our senses. But what especially grieves the heart of Mary our Mother is, that while asking her to pity our exile, we are ignorant of what that exile really is, and, owing to our blindness and degradation, we end by growing used to banishment, and possibly even love its wretchedness.

But although we do not feel the misfortune of our banishment, Mary feels it for us—she who in heaven contemplates the august Trinity, and enjoys the eternal embrace of her Divine Son. Like ourselves, but in a far greater degree, she for many long years suffered all the bitterness of exile. For sixty-three years—some think it was seventy-two—she drank to the dregs of the chalice of that bitterness. During her long life she saw all the dangers which surround us; the Mother of Sorrows, she saw the torrent of the world's iniquities rush down upon herself and her Son.

After having received the last breath of her virginal Spouse, she saw, with her own eyes, the cruel and bloody death of her beloved and only Son. Alone, without Spouse or Son, she lived on in exile, ever walking on ground which had been watered by the blood of her Jesus; always seeing that precious blood shed in vain, according to all appearance; and witnessing the persecution and the martyrdom to which the disciples of her Son, who had become her own children, were exposed; children sacrificed as it were upon new Calvaries. And what grief was it for her to see her people, God's chosen people, blinded, ungrateful, hurrying to their own destruction, incurring a curse by trampling under foot the blood which was shed to save them; to see that multitudes of souls would, in the course of successive ages, resist the Divine inspiration and the love of God, and precipitate themselves into the eternal flames of hell! Yes, truly, Mary feels for our blindness and our misery, when we tell her that we are poor exiles; we say so with our lips, but are very far from understanding

the full meaning of the phrase. Instead of feeling sad in our banishment, perhaps we fear nothing so much as having to leave it. Instead of dreading its dangers, we run after them, we love them, and sacrifice our eternity for trifles of a moment's duration. Heaven with its boundless glory and happiness has little power over us, and we value it less than the temporal sacrifices which we ought readily to make in order to gain it.

We dream away our life in an alarming indifference concerning the one thing needful,—the eternal salvation of our souls. We make no account of anything but the present, and we run with feverish haste in pursuit of the fleeting things of this world; but a day will come when the terrible moment of death will overtake us, and then we shall be rudely awakened when it is too late.

These, then, are the ravages original sin has worked in us, and which are being daily increased by our own follies and our own transgressions. We shall do well to ponder the striking picture which St. Bernard draws of our wanderings, in his sermons on the *Salve Regina*.

II.

We allow ourselves to be led astray by the fascinations of our place of exile.

Man, according to the original plan of God Almighty, was destined, had he not sinned, to live continually in the presence of his Creator by contemplating his perfections; he would have had a perfect knowledge of the truth, and this knowledge would have engendered love; love would have ensured perseverance, and lasting perseverance would have caused increasing enjoy-

ment. Man was destined, had he remained always united to Him who is immortal, to possess a life that should be immortal in himself also. From this it is evident that the true and supreme happiness of man consists in a full and perfect knowledge of his Creator.

But when he was attacked by the wily machinations of the infernal serpent, when he was deceived by the false and deceitful charms of what, after all, we must acknowledge is nothing but vanity, namely, this visible creation, he forthwith abandoned the source of all truth and beauty, and sought to satisfy the cravings of his heart in the pursuit of objects of sense. From that moment, struck by the blindness of ignorance, he was driven from Paradise and deprived of the contemplative light which had illuminated his soul to its deepest depths. He became a wanderer and a fugitive upon the earth; a wanderer, through the disorder of his wanton desires; a fugitive, by reason of his guilty conscience.

For, when a soul has lost grace and no longer seeks the Divine assistance, any kind of temptation will suffice to overthrow it. This is why the heart of man remains firm so long as it is animated by the love of God; this is why there is no inordinate attachment to creatures so long as God alone is the object of its love; but directly it begins to pour itself out exteriorly on the love of creatures and the satisfaction of worldly desires, then it is divided between as many different objects as there are pleasures to be found here below. Thus it is that the soul which has not learnt to love the beauty, the sweetness, the peace, the security and permanence of the light which once gladdened it, cannot enjoy repose; for, finding no lasting pleasure in the vain and deceitful objects of its pursuit, and feeling always an insatiable desire of a happiness it is unable to reach, it becomes the sport of the stormy sea of its own passions, and can find no haven of rest in the place of

its exile. Some there are whose one desire is to gratify the sense of sight, and glut their curiosity. With this end in view, they travel the wide world over in search of grand or lovely scenery; they are for ever seeking for the realisation of their ideal of the beautiful; they will explore the entire creation in order to find what they vainly imagine will satisfy their insatiable wants and cravings. Others, again, there are who aim at indulging their sense of smell in delicious perfumes, but growing quickly weary of this kind of pleasure, run to that which is afforded by sweet sounds and choicest melodies. Others seek to gladden the sense of touch, surrounding themselves with objects which give ease and comfort to the body, and studiously preserving the recollection of their pleasurable sensations. Lastly, there are epicures who abandon themselves to the delights of the taste, and who think of nothing but savoury meats or the most luscious fruits.

Thus, the soul ignorant of itself and knowing not God, batters upon vanities and begs of the world to satisfy all its desires—the world which is as but “a figure” and which “passes as a shadow;” but it begs in vain for something that may satisfy in some degree this ceaseless perverted desire of happiness. Hence, in this place of exile, there arise various disorders, a violent attachment to vain trifles, a continual struggle to attain the impossible, and a ceaseless distraction of the soul which knows no repose; the heart remains ever a prey to unrest and disquietude, until the moment arrives when it resolves to return to the truth, which is its true rest. Until that moment it must be tortured with the pangs of hunger, because it desires to nourish itself on the “husks of swine;” nor will it see the end of its misery, until—with the prodigal son—it longs after the home that has been abandoned, in which even the servants have food and clothing in all plenty.

In this earthly exile, from the date of man’s fall to

the coming of the Queen of Heaven, the whole human race, with few exceptions, had always sought happiness in the pilgrimage of this life, and no longer sighed after, or so much as desired, its native country, the home of truth.

The Blessed Virgin was the first to open the path to that country, and revealed it to the world by giving birth to the Truth. And this is why we also, poor exiles, cry to you, O Queen of Mercy!

Amongst the well-nigh countless conversions wrought by the Blessed Virgin, there is not one in which Mary, whose title is the "Seat of Wisdom," has not done away with the "fascination of trifling," and caused the light of truth to reign in its stead: there is no conversion to be met with where she has not inspired a contempt for, and hatred of all inordinate attachment to the things of this world, to prepare the way for a love and esteem of spiritual blessings alone and of heavenly treasures.

The following is an illustration of this truth. It is recorded by St. Gregory the Great. A young girl, named Musa, sought, in company with so many others, her whole happiness in the follies and dissipations of the world, without, however, giving up her devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Suddenly a complete change was worked in her.

She became serious and recollected; she no longer was always laughing and joking; she shunned the pleasures of the world; performed her religious duties with fervour and exactness; in fact, her whole behaviour showed that something unusual had happened to her. Her parents were filled with astonishment, and being puzzled as to the reason of this wonderful transformation, inquired of their daughter what it all meant. Being forced at last to reply to their questions, she told them her secret. "The Blessed Virgin, accompanied by a

number of young virgins, appeared to me in a dream, and asked me if I too should like to form one of that company. I answered that I would do so joyfully. 'Very well,' she then said; 'change your mode of life, renounce your follies, give up so much levity and waste of time as you have been guilty of; be serious and thoughtful, and in thirty days I will come and fetch you.'" The girl's parents, although well pleased to see the change wrought in her, made but little account of this vision, believing it to be only the offspring of her heated imagination. Towards the expiration of thirty days Musa fell ill, all the efforts of the physicians to work a cure were in vain, and Mary redeemed her promise. Escorted by her band of virgins, she appeared to the sufferer at the appointed time, who in quite an ecstacy of joy cried out: "I come, dear Lady, I come," and so expired.

PRAYER.

O Blessed and Holy Virgin, Mother of Mercy, I, who am poor and blind, an exile from my home, send up to you my cries of distress, and place all my confidence in you. You have said: "Whoso findeth me findeth life." Open my eyes and teach me to know Him who is the Truth and the Life. Help me to feel deeply, by the light and unction of the Holy Spirit, who abides within you, the vanity and nothingness of all fleeting things, so that I never may mistake this sorrowful place of exile for my true country. Help me to be detached from all things, so that I may love, may seek, may desire nothing but God; God alone, who is the Infinite Good. Never let me be so unhappy as to separate myself from Him by mortal sin. Never let me—you who listen to all who have recourse to you—never let me be so unhappy as to be an exile for ever from

heaven ; obtain for me the happiness of seeing God who is my Father, and of seeing yourself who are my ever-beloved Mother. I ask these graces by the heart of your Son Jesus, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

Ave Maria.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

OUR REHABILITATION IN OUR EXILE.

Ad te clamamus, exules.

“To thee do we cry, poor banished children.”

For the dark picture of the humiliations, the sorrows, and the miseries of our exile, let us now substitute that of our rehabilitation, with its glories, its consolations, and its hopes. Here, indeed, we are forced to exclaim with the Psalmist: *Hæc mutatio dexteræ Excelsi*. “This is the change of the right hand of the Most High.”—Ps. lxxvi. 11.

This world must, without doubt, remain to the end of time a place of exile, and the children of men will always have to say to the Blessed Virgin: “To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.” But through the Saviour whom she has given to us, and through her own help as well, the Divine mercy has changed the character of our banishment; it has reinstated us in so glorious a manner, and has given us so many motives for consolation, that our exile has become for us the source of eternal glory and happiness.

I.

Our restoration in our exile.

God has reinstated us in this our exile. Man, in alienating himself from God by his rebellion, had exchanged the earthly paradise for a land which lay under

a curse. What did God resolve upon in his mercy? He came Himself to man, and as man was incapable of expiating the offence which he had committed against the Infinite Majesty, and as, in addition, he had neither the will nor the courage to atone, God Himself came to us and made expiation for the sins of humanity, by taking on Himself all the humiliations and all the sufferings of our exile.

Adam, in the days of his innocence had seen God only with the eyes of his soul; but in the Incarnation the Divine Redeemer appeared to man in the form of a man. *Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.* "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us."—John, i. 14. And thus the shame of our exile disappeared, as it were, in his glory. *Vidimus gloriam ejus, gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre, plenum gratiae et veritatis:* "And we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."—John, i. 14.

Ever since that time, our exile has ceased, so to speak, to be an exile. Man has found again his God. The Incarnate God will multiply Himself through all ages by the Sacrament of his Love; the entire world will become a second earthly Paradise, and in the remotest ends of the earth where Jesus Christ has been welcomed, men will say "He dwells amongst us."

When an outcast—rejected by his family and by his country, stripped of his possessions, and deprived of his rights—sees his parents and friends come to him, not merely to reinstate him, but to dwell with him and re-establish him in his former position, from that moment the very place of his exile seems to undergo a transformation, and to be changed into his native land.

Now, this is precisely what our Divine Redeemer has done for us.

Man, through sin, had forfeited his adoption into the family of God. Degraded, and driven from the earthly

paradise, he was no longer God's adopted son, but was only the child of man, and for his heritage he had nothing but the land of his exile. The prison of hell opened its black abyss before his view, and he saw that heaven was closed and lost to him. But notice how everything becomes changed. The Word Incarnate comes to regenerate man. He causes the image of God to shine more brightly than before in the human soul; man becomes the brother of Christ Jesus, and by Him is once more a child of God, and as such he recovers, at the price of the blood poured out on Calvary, his heavenly inheritance. He is the "heir of God, and joint-heir of Jesus Christ." Rom. viii. 7. *Haeres Dei, et cohaeres Christi*. Thus is man raised up again, and changing the tears of banishment into tears of joy, cries out: *O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!* "O happy fault, which has merited for us such and so great a Redeemer!"—*Office of Holy Saturday*.

But before the sun of righteousness arose upon the world, the fair herald of the morn was to make her appearance; she who was to bring forth a child, and be the sole helpmate of Jesus in the reinstatement of the human race: the Immaculate Virgin, whom the angel addresses "blessed amongst women." So fair, so sweet, so brilliant, was she in her appearing, that she filled the whole world with joy. "*Nativitas tua, Dei Genitrix Virgo, gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo,*" exclaims the Church. "Thy Nativity, O Maiden Mother of God, brought tidings of joy to all the world." *Office of Nat. B. V. M.* From that moment the darkness of our exile began to disappear; for the blessed Aurora was already radiant with the glory of the Divine Sun she was about to bring forth, and the angels, enraptured at the sight of the future Queen of Heaven, cried: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun,

terrible as an army set in array?"—*Quæ est ista quæ exsurgit tamquam aurora, pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata?*—Cant. vi. 9.

First of all the ransomed before the coming of the Messias; glory of Jerusalem and joy of Israel, hell never had any power over her. "The Word," as St. Francis of Sales writes, in his quaint and unaffected style, "destined for his beloved Mother a favour worthy of the love of a Son who, being all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good, would prepare for Himself a Mother after his own heart, and to whom He would have his redemption applied after a special and peculiar manner, preserving her from that which in others required a remedy, so that the sin which had flowed down from generation to generation should not come nigh to her. In this way she was ransomed in so wonderful a manner that, although the torrent of original sin came rolling down, with its poisoned waters around the conception of this holy Lady, threatening to engulph her in its flood, together with the other daughters of Adam, no sooner did it reach that point than it stopped short and was checked in its course, as the river Jordan was stayed in the days of Joshua, and for a similar reason. For that river stayed its flow out of respect for the Ark of the Covenant, while original sin held back its flood out of reverence and awe when in the presence of the true tabernacle of the Eternal Covenant."

Thus, in the first moment of her conception, Mary appears without the stain of our origin; she appears full of grace; the Lord is with her. It is from her that shall be born Jesus who calls Himself the Christ and Emmanuel, because He is to save us, and to make his dwelling in our midst, never more to leave us.

During that ever memorable and most sacred night, when Mary, the heavenly dawn, brought forth Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, heaven seemed to have come down upon earth, and this land of exile became a Para-

disc, whilst angels in the midst of vast floods of light filled the sky with their hymns of joy: *Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis!* "Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will."—Luke, ii. 14.

"Peace to men of good will." Jesus has brought glory back to the homes of fallen man; but all do not share in this peace; it comes to those only who are of good will. To all are offered peace and reinstatement in grace; all may become again the children of God and the heirs of heaven; but this grace must be accepted by them. There are many, alas! who refuse it. "He came unto his own and his own received Him not; but to as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the children of God."—*In propria venit, et sui eum non receperunt; Quotquot autem receperunt eum dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri.*—John, i. 11, 12. Henceforth, for evermore, will the human race be divided into two camps, the children of darkness and the children of light; the children of men and the children of God; the earthly city which rejects grace, and the heavenly city which accepts it. God created us without any co-operation on our part, but He will not save us unless we help ourselves.

II.

Our consolations in our exile.

God has consoled us in our exile. When the angel appeared to the shepherds, he said: "Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people."—Luke, ii. 10. Not the joy which the world gives, with its honours and its pleasures, the joy which men had ever sought after, always restless and

always wretched. It was to a stable, to a poor crib, to a poor child wrapped in swaddling clothes, that the shepherds were sent; but the angel brought them a true joy, for it was that which comes from heaven and is given by God.

The Babe of Bethlehem was God; He was the Truth; it was to the joys of Truth, the joys of God, that the angel invited the shepherds.

These joys already inundated the most pure heart of the Blessed Mother kneeling by the cradle of Jesus; they inebriated the heart of her spouse, who also was a Virgin; they were to fill to overflowing the hearts of the shepherds and the kings; they were to be poured out upon all generations to the end of time, for the God born at Bethlehem is called *Emmanuel*; that is, "God with us."

Once He was born in the stable, but it was that He might be born daily upon thousands of altars; it was that He might dwell everywhere and always in our midst, and share with us the banishment of our exile. "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Eccce ego vobiscum sum, usque ad consummationem sæculi*.—Matt. xxviii. 20.

The altar, the tabernacle—these change our exile into our fatherland and make a heaven of the earth. How can any one be looked upon now as an exile who contemplates and possesses the Adorable Eucharist, in which there dwells God made Man, the God of love, He on whom angels long to gaze, an exile like ourselves.

Jesus had, indeed, given very many spiritual consolations to us, but the supreme consolation of our banishment is Himself. Yes! Himself made prisoner of love within our tabernacles, the Divine Victim of our altars, the heavenly food of our souls. What more do men need to make this earth a heaven? Let but the veil of faith be lifted before our eyes, and then we can truly say to the God of all consolation: *Quam magna multi-*

tudo dulcedinis tuæ Domine, quam abscondisti timentibus Te!—"How great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!"—Ps. xxx. 20.

But it is not only the presence of Jesus that we enjoy in our exile; our Mother, and our heavenly brethren are not really absent from us.

Since the hands of angels bore Mary heavenward from the tomb, her dwelling has been on high; yet how often has our Queen come down again to show herself to her children!

How many sanctuaries have been raised on the spots where she has appeared! The grotto of Lourdes, that blessed vestibule, is still redolent of the sweet presence of the Queen of Heaven! But the loving and ever Blessed Virgin will have her maternal presence continually felt in the world, she who unceasingly causes consolation and joy to flow into thousands of hearts; she, who multiplies with so much goodness the signs of her power and of her love by unending benefits and astounding miracles!

And the saints, our brethren, do they, too, not hold communication with us—they, who so frequently have appeared to God's children, and unceasingly protect them, and comfort them by so many prodigies of love?

After these reflections let us strive to realise how God has provided consolation for us in our exile!

III.

Our exile has become the road to heaven.

God has made our exile a source of eternal bliss and glory, and has thus animated us with courage amid our sufferings.

God, in pardoning our sins and in giving us back his holy love, has delivered us neither from the pains nor the troubles of our banishment.

The sentence pronounced in the beginning of the world will remain in force till time shall be no more :

“Cursed is the earth in thy work . . . with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life.

. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth . . .

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken ; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return ”—Gen.

iii. 17. The woman, too, will ever see her sorrows multiply ; will ever feel the burden of the yoke under which she placed herself when she seduced her spouse.

But in the immensity of his mercy and of his love, God has willed that the toil and trials of our exile should be not only an expiation of our sins, but also a continual source of merit ; the coin of infinite value, with which we may purchase the eternal glory of heaven. Could anything give greater consolation to an exile ?

If some one who had been driven from his country were assured that in a few years he should return home ; and that meanwhile the person who had procured his banishment would hand over to him a sum more than sufficient to enable him to gain an immense fortune during his exile, so that he might return to his family, loaded with wealth, would not the man be grateful, nay, would he not be abundantly comforted from the moment the joyful news was brought to him ? Now, this is what God has done for us.

After the Son of God had gone through so much for the expiation of our guilt, He might, in all justice, have inflicted upon us the sufferings of this life in simple atonement, without attaching to them any value or merit whatever in respect to the next world. But, in his infinite mercy, He has willed that whatever

reparation we make to his offended justice here below, shall be returned to us in heaven, not only a hundred-fold, but out of all proportion to our merits, by granting us the Beatific Vision in reward for our fidelity.

IV.

The Blessed Virgin won her glory in exile.

Thus have all the saints won their eternal happiness. The Blessed Virgin alone gained her crown without having need of expiation; for she alone was immaculate. Lift up your eyes to heaven and behold the dazzling throne of the Queen of Heaven. What glory! It is greater than that of all the angels and of all the saints. How has Mary obtained it? Doubtless she received incomparable graces as predestined to be the Mother of God, but God glorified Mary, as He made glorious all the saints, according to her works. "He will render to every man according to his works." *Reddet unicuique secundum opera sua.*—Apoc. xxii. 12. He made no exception in the case of Mary. Mary merited all her glory by corresponding with the most perfect fidelity, with the most ardent and constant love, to the immense graces which God heaped upon her. After this we need not be surprised that God left the beloved Mother of his Son so long in this earthly exile. It was here that, like the elect, she gained her crown; and a long sojourn here below was needed if she were to merit a glory surpassing that of all the angels and saints put together.

But how was it that, even during so long a lifetime, Mary merited a glory which it would seem many centuries would scarce be sufficient to have acquired? That we may be able to answer this question, we must consider the two elements of merit—grace and correspondence with grace. The greater the grace, the greater

are the means of attaining sanctity. Without grace man can do nothing in the supernatural order: "Without me you can do nothing," says Jesus Christ. But God who gives us grace, requires the co-operation of his creatures. It is necessary, therefore, that—always with the assistance of grace—man should freely correspond to God's graces. The glory of the saints in heaven is the outgrowth and resultant of grace and of correspondence with grace. Were any one perfectly faithful during the whole course of his life to the graces of God, he would receive in heaven all the glory corresponding to those graces.

God is Master of his gifts, and his graces are purely gratuitous benefits. He distributes them according to his good pleasure, for our good and his own greater glory; but He always proportions them to the dignities to which He elevates, and to the duties which He imposes.

Mary, as destined to become the Mother of God, received graces proportioned to her exalted dignity, but so wonderful was their excellence that the very first of them far exceeded the united graces granted to all the angels and all the saints. From the very first moment of her conception, consequently, she was raised to a degree of grace superior to that which could ever be attained by the whole Court of Heaven, and it is on this account that the Church tells us the foundations of her sanctity were laid upon the mountain of the City of God.—*Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis*.—Ps. lxxxvi.

2. But as she advanced in age the grace within her increased continually to such an extent that God alone comprehends its marvellous greatness. In fact, the Blessed Virgin always raised her correspondence to grace to the high level itself of that grace, and from this the learned and pious theologian, Suarez, draws a conclusion which baffles all power of calculation. He says that Mary, by a perfect correspondence to

the measure of the grace she had gained between the first moment of her life, and that when she was about to perform an action, doubled at the instant she performed that action all the grace acquired throughout her entire life; so that by her last action before the moment of death, she doubled all the riches of the graces and merits which she had gained during her whole life. This is a depth of glory which the imagination cannot fathom, and all this weight of glory Mary has merited, just like the rest of the saints merited theirs; and her crown, like theirs, is most certainly, and above everything else, a crown of grace, but it is also, in the words of the Apostle St. Paul, "a crown of justice."

V.

We, in our turn, must gain heaven by our exile.

Thus, then, preexisting from the greatness of her graces, Mary was placed under precisely the same conditions as ourselves. Like us, she had to merit her glory by fidelity to grace. This is why, when the woman in the Gospel said to Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee," our Blessed Saviour replied: "Nay, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it."—Luke, xi. 27, 28.

Like the Mother of God, we are in this land of exile only that we may glorify God by doing his will at every instant, and may thus merit for ourselves eternal glory. God has certainly left us trouble in this life, as a punishment due to our sins; but, in his infinite mercy, and in order to give us courage, the Son of God came and drank to the dregs the bitter chalice. And by transforming the degrees of his justice into the blessings of a father, He decreed not only that the accomplishment

of his Divine Will (which is our essential duty) should be rewarded by eternal happiness, but that the sufferings due to our sins should become the means of raising us to a high degree of glory in heaven. Therefore, the just consequences of our revolt against Him—that is, the revolt of our passions against our reason, and even our very temptations—become, by the assistance of grace and our own feeble efforts, as well as by our patience in bearing with them and valour in conquering them, the occasion of a glory and a happiness in heaven such as neither eye hath seen nor ear hath heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive here below.

What treasures we might amass daily, were we anxious to do so, for all eternity. And yet we think of this so seldom! A few moments are devoted by us to God and the well-being of our soul, and as soon as possible we hasten to give ourselves up entirely to the interests of this life, leaving God out of all our thoughts. Thus we consume the energies of the greater portion of a lifetime in amassing perishable things, with a feverish activity; things which, in one instant, death will snatch from our grasp. We sacrifice everything for this world; perhaps even, by living in a state of mortal sin, we may have made it impossible, for some time at least, to accumulate any treasure in the world to come, and yet all that we have gained in this world we must leave behind us. We risk having to appear before God with empty hands, with nothing gained for the life which will have no end; since eternal reward will be given by God to those alone who have laboured for Him. And yet, what a mine of wealth has been ever close at hand! “The men of riches have found nothing in their hands,” says the Holy Ghost, speaking of the great day when eternity begins.—Ps. xxv. 6.

What, then, must be done in order to avoid so melancholy a fate?

1^o We must live in God's grace: this is the funda-

mental and essential condition of acquiring merit for heaven.

2° We must obey God, doing his Holy Will in all things, according as He manifests it to us by the commandments and the duties of our state.

3°. We must do all our actions for the service, the love, the glory of God.

Without these conditions our life may be a very busy one, and even a very brilliant one, but it will be said to us: "You have sowed much and brought in little." *Seminastis multum, et intulistis parum.*—Aggeus, i. 6.

PRAYER.

O most prudent Virgin, who never permitted one day of your life to pass without doubling at every instant your merits and your glory, teach me to put to profit, as you did, the short and precious time of this life. Do not allow me to be filled at the hour of my death with sadness, by the sight, when it is too late, of the illusions of my life, and the irretrievable worthlessness of all my labours and all my fatigues. Help me, from this day forward, to begin to follow in all things the Divine Will, for the love of God; so that being raised to higher glory by my merits, I may be able to love and glorify God better for all eternity, and to see you more nearly, my good, my holy Mother, who art the glory and the joy of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

Ave Maria.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

MARY IS THE NEW EVE.

Ad te clamamus, exules filii Evæ.

“To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.”

I.

Eve and Mary.

Our exile is our first claim to the compassion of the Queen of Heaven. But we must add to it another in which all our miseries are summed up, and which recalls the origin of all, viz. : that we are the children of Eve. Eve, by causing our first father, Adam, to fall into original sin, brought ruin upon us ; Mary, the new Eve, by giving us the Redeemer, brought salvation to us.

Eve, at the foot of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by listening to the serpent, was the cause of all our miseries ; Mary, of whom our Saviour was born, became at the foot of the cross the beginning and source of our salvation. Eve was seduced by the devil in the earthly Paradise ; Mary, with Jesus, the new Adam, has crushed the head of the hellish serpent, and has given us back the life and the liberty of the children of God.

“Rejoice, O Father Adam !” exclaimed St. Bernard, in speaking of the Immaculate Conception, “and you, above all, O Mother Eve, rejoice ! Both of you gave

us death as you had given us life ; but sadder still than this, you gave us death before you gave us life. But, both of you, be consoled by the sight of Mary, your daughter ; you, especially Eve, who were the first cause of our misery, and through whom shame has fallen upon all women ; for now this shame will for ever be blotted out, so that man will no longer be able to utter the reproach : ‘ the woman whom thou gavest me . . . gave me of the tree and I did eat.’ —Gen. iii. 12.

“Hasten, then, Eve ! hasten to Mary the Mother ! hasten to your daughter. Let the daughter answer for the mother, and make amends to the father ; for, if man has fallen through a woman, without a woman he could never rise again.”

Eve and Mary both came forth from the hand of God, adorned with the beauty of innocence, and clothed in the glory of divine grace. Eve lost these precious gifts by sin ; Mary preserved and increased them up to her latest breath. Fallen Eve, while communicating the life of the body to her children, passed on to them the death of the soul, which originated in the sin of Adam, whom she led astray. Mary, conceived without the stain of original sin and always spotless, has given us back, by her Divine Son, the life of grace, and has made us once more the children of God. Eve brought about our destruction by listening to the fallen angel ; Mary brought about our salvation by listening to the message of the Archangel Gabriel. Eve, by consenting to temptation, closed to us the gates of Paradise ; Mary, by her consent to the annunciation of the angel, brought Paradise down into our banishment.

Scarcely had she given utterance to the words, “Be it done unto me according to thy word,” when the Holy Spirit came upon her, the power of the Most High overshadowed her, and the Eternal Son of the Father, the Word of God, became incarnate within her. “The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us.”

Adam and Eve transmitted to us the sin which had entered into their soul, and with that sin all its consequences; as the result of that sin, our souls have been filled with darkness, our senses have become perverted, and our will has been inclined ever to evil, while a continual war is being waged against us by the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life. From this has arisen that terrible and shameful war waged incessantly by our passions, which have revolted against the law of God—avarice, anger, revenge, hatred, envy, luxury; a war so terrible that it caused the Apostle St. Paul to exclaim: “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” *Quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus?*—Rom. vii. 24. But, if God, in order not to deprive us of so precious an opportunity of giving Him glory, of showing Him our love, of expiating our sins, and of acquiring a goodly stock of merit in heaven, has left us to wage continual warfare, He has given us, at the same time, his grace by which we can do all things, to use the expression of St. Paul; “I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.” *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.*—Phil. iv. 13. And He has established as the treasurer and dispenser of his graces, Mary our Mother, who combats with us; He has given us her who is called “Tower of ivory,” “Queen of victory,” “terrible as an army set in array;” so that we may always be assured of conquest.

Her name alone suffices to make hell quake; hell never could triumph, never will triumph over her. She is Immaculate, Invincible; and Lucifer himself, the Prince of Darkness, will feel for ever the weight of that virgin’s foot which crushed his head on Calvary.

Finally, Eve, as the occasion of Adam’s sin, drew down upon her children temporal punishment, labour, weariness, sorrows, misfortunes, war, sickness, and death.

Mary, in this life, like her Divine Son, shared our

sorrows, and drained to the very dregs the cup of tribulation, which is handed on from generation to generation.

Though born of the royal house of David, Mary appeared in this world divested of all the glory of her royal lineage; she was overwhelmed with all the humiliations and troubles caused by poverty; it was in an abandoned stable that she gave birth to her Divine Son; the wicked Herod sought the Child-God to put Him to death, and the mother fled with her Babe into a land of exile; Simeon predicted that a sword should pierce her soul, and this prophecy was fulfilled on Calvary.

Look at the Mother of Sorrows standing beside the cross: it is all stained with the blood of her Son, dying the death of a malefactor. Listen to her cry: "All you who pass by the way, look and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."—Lament. i. 12.

Thus did Mary expiate the sins of Eve, and thus did she comfort us in the sufferings which that guilty mother brought upon us.

Would that we could understand how Mary's maternal heart softens towards us when we remind her that we are the children of Eve—*filii Evæ!*

She sees us come into the world with original sin, which deprives us of sanctifying grace; she is conscious of the guilt we have incurred by our own many sins; she sees all the weakness to which we are subject, all the passions by which we are agitated, all the dangers to which we are exposed; she is well aware that at any moment we may suffer shipwreck on the stormy ocean of this life, and lose for ever our immortal souls. In addition to all these spiritual diseases, she sees the sinking and anguish of heart which we undergo, all our numerous annoyances, troubles, afflictions, bodily illnesses, persecutions, misfortunes, to which death alone, with its tears and lamentations, will put an end.

When, therefore, we, poor sorrowing children of Eve, cry out to the Blessed Virgin, we mean to remind her that she is to us in the place of Eve—who proved to be so harsh a stepmother, rather than a loving mother, to us—and we beg the New Eve to show herself to us as our true Mother.

And, surely, we cannot turn away our tearful eyes from the First Eve, and fix them on the Second, without finding great consolation and sweet peace in the thought of our having in Mary a better Mother than Eve was—a most tender, a most loving, a most generous Mother.

II.

Mary, through Jesus, gives us that supernatural life which Eve, through Adam, deprived us of.

It would, nevertheless, avail us but little to be consoled by Mary, amid the sufferings of this short exile, if she did not become for us the new Eve, by giving us the life of the soul which the sinful Eve took from us by her sin; this last grace it is, which we ask of Mary, when we remind her that we are the sorrowful children of Eve. This grace it is, above all, which makes Mary the new Eve for us, and by which she merits the name of the true “Mother of the living.”

We still receive our natural life as Adam and Eve transmitted it to us, vitiated by sin; but Jesus agonizing on the Cross has given Mary the power of grafting us on Him in the wound of his Sacred Side, so that we may draw from Him a new life, the supernatural life of grace.

It is of this mystery that St. Paul is speaking when he says, that original sin made us like unto branches of the wild olive, but that by the redemption and by holy

baptism, we have been grafted on the Divine Olive, which is Jesus Christ. The root from which we have sprung and the earth which nourished it have fallen under a curse; but no sooner is that earth watered by the blood of Jesus Christ than another sap—a holy and divine sap—begins to flow through those hitherto wild branches, and these being now grafted upon the Divine Olive Tree have power to bring forth fruit worthy of heaven.

Now, it was from the most pure and divinely fruitful body of Mary that the Divine Olive came forth—Jesus Christ, from whom we receive this supernatural life. In giving us Mary to be our Mother, He willed that her own pure virgin hands should engraft us upon Him.

All the branches, alas! are not grafted upon Jesus; many have remained upon the wild olive tree, and will be condemned with it to be burned in inextinguishable fire. Let those who are so unhappy as to be in a state of mortal sin, rise out of it without delay, for they are cut off from the Divine Olive, upon which they were engrafted.

Go! unhappy child of Eve, and throw yourself at Mary's feet. She is the Mother of Mercy; she will take pity upon you, and reconcile you with her own Divine Son.

Thus, a new father takes the place of Adam in the person of Jesus; and a new Mother takes the place of Eve in the person of Mary. He who has been grafted by Mary upon Jesus, receives within him the spirit of Jesus, which is the Spirit of God: sin no longer dwells within him; for, as St. John says: "Whosoever is born of God, committeth not sin; for, his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God;" so long, that is, as he remains a child of God.

The disorder produced by sin is repaired within him; concupiscence is extinguished, by the power and virtue of Jesus Christ; the troubles of life, though they still

remain, are softened by the consolations, peace, and divine unction which Jesus pours into the soul; our patience is sorely tried at first, but troubles which form indeed, matter of patience, end by becoming our joy, as we gaze upon the Crucified One, are ever a gain to us, and the seed of a vast harvest of eternal glory.

All these blessings God has given us in Jesus, and Jesus was born of Mary. With great reason then did Mary exclaim: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name And his mercy is from generation to generation, to them that fear Him."—Luke, i. 48, 49. And thus will it ever be O good and holy Mother!

For eighteen hundred years, each succeeding generation has called you blessed; and we too, as we pass in our turn through this world, we proclaim you blessed: and all the generations that come after us will love you and will call you blessed; for the Lord God has poured out the full tide of his graces upon you, and by communicating them to the whole race of mankind, you have given back life and joy to all the children of Eve who have ever had recourse to you.

A certain poor widow, honest and hardworking, had a son who was godless, idle, given to drinking, and in short, was the scandal of the whole country round. The unhappy mother wept for him day and night.

During the spring of the year 1863, a noble lady in the neighbourhood wanted a nurse for her children, and having made an engagement with the widow for this purpose, took her to Paris. The poor woman had often heard of "Our Lady of Victories;" and now began to conceive a great trust in the Blessed Virgin. Whenever she could manage to find a few spare moments, she would run to that privileged sanctuary of Mary, and with tears implore the conversion of her son.

The last time she was able to make her customary visit, she prayed longer than usual, and wept bitterly at the feet of the Blessed Virgin. When she had ended her prayer, she felt within her so lively a confidence and so deep an emotion that she could think of nothing else. A few days later on, the poor woman left Paris and returned to her native village. On reaching her journey's end, she was surprised to see her son waiting at the station to receive her, for he had never been in the habit of paying her attentions of such a kind.

Imagine, then, her joy when the youth threw his arms round her neck, and said : " Dear mother ! you wrote to tell me you had been praying a great deal for me to our Lady of Victories. Well ! she has converted me. One night I had gone to bed feeling very sad, after an ill-spent day. I lay awake all night, tossing in my bed, and strangely enough my thoughts kept constantly wandering to our Lady of Victories. When morning came I felt constrained, in spite of myself, to go to church. There my heart ran over with grief and I cried like a child. After a good deal of hesitation I went to the priest and made my confession. From that moment, dear mother, I have changed my life altogether : I work ; I never go to the public house ; and my delight is go to church to pray before the image of the Blessed Virgin."

The poor widow joyfully embraced her son, and gave thanks to Mary ; she then asked him when this change had taken place, and found it had happened on the very day on which she had prayed so fervently, and felt such confidence in our Lady of Victories.

Since then this young man has led a most edifying life, thus repairing the scandal he had given, and, at the same time, setting an example of virtue and of zeal in every kind of charitable undertaking.—*Garland of Mary.*

PRAYER.

O Mary, Immaculate Virgin Mother! our glory and the "Cause of our Joy," I, a poor sorrowful child of Eve, come to throw myself at your feet, and leave myself in the care of your motherly love. Remember, O good Mother! that God has made you so great and so glorious, in order that you might be able to save us. Do not suffer me amidst so many perils to be so unhappy as to fall into sin, and thus to make of no avail, in my behalf, both your love for me and the Blood of your Divine Son. Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

THE SIGHS OF MARY'S CHILDREN.

Ad te suspiramus.

“To thee do we send up our sighs.”

I.*The Sighs of the Saints.*

A cry is the sudden expression of a great sorrow or a great joy ; this is why it is not of common occurrence, and does not last.

But sighs express prolonged sufferings or long-cherished desires. Hence we, poor, wretched mortals, are ever breathing sighs during our brief pilgrimage, sighs which reveal that a terrible disorder has come upon our nature.

We are not speaking here of the sighs which are engendered by weariness and disgust, nor of those which proceed from a heart wearied out by vain emotions, or by disappointment at not finding in creatures the happiness which they can never confer. We are speaking only of the sighs which bring real consolation to the soul ; of those which reach from earth to Heaven.

Such sighs are a real prayer ; by them we converse with God and his saints ; they form attentive and fervent prayer, because it comes from the heart ; humble and reverent prayer, because it has its source in the

intimate conviction of our own sinfulness, and in the high estimation of the greatness of God and of the saints; prayer that moves and touches, because it springs from a soul that is suffering: and sighs are the natural expression of suffering. Thus, holy people have often preferred using the language of sighs to that of words.

We sigh, when we desire to obtain some blessing or to be delivered from some evil. Now, there is but one object which can satisfy all the desires of the human heart, and put an end to all its sufferings: the good for which man was created, the Infinite Good, God Himself.

St Augustine, after having strayed so long in the pursuit of happiness, found it at last, not in creatures, but in God; then did he cry out: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart will never be in peace until it rests in Thee."—*Fecistis nos Domine ad te, et irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.*

But God, the essential and necessary centre of our happiness, dwells in our heavenly country, whilst we are living in a land of exile. Thus, it follows, that every soul must, even though it knows it not, unconsciously sigh after God. For who is there who does not sigh after happiness? But the only happiness of the soul is God; therefore, when man seeks in creatures the happiness for which he is created, he discovers sooner or later that they are only phantoms of what he was desiring; consequently, being always deceived, he is ever sighing in vain, and knows not that in sighing after happiness, he is, in reality, sighing after God.

It is by reason of this deception that sin is called error, wandering, vanity, falsehood; and that the devil, the father of sin, and a murderer from the beginning, is called the father of lies.

A child of the truth, a child of God, enlightened by the Sun of Justice, sighs after nothing but his Father who is God, and the home of his Father, the heavenly

country. He says with the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God."—*Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita desiderat anima mea ad te Deus.* Ps. xxv. 2. "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day."—*Deus, Deus meus, ad te de luce vigilo.*—Ps. lxii. i.

St Paul, who had not been indifferent to, but the sworn enemy of Jesus, looked upon all things created as refuse, after he had learned to know Christ; and in speaking to his much-loved flock at Philippi, he says: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."—Phil. i. 21. It was, indeed, a gain, for Christ was his all, and death alone could unite him to Jesus. From this proceeded the inward strife of his heart. He desired to die that he might be with Jesus; but love to his brethren made his presence in their midst necessary. "And what I shall choose I know not But I am straitened between two, having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better. But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you."—*Quid eligam ignoro Coarctor autem à duobus; desiderium habens dissolvi et esse cum Christo, multo magis melius . . . Permanere autem in carne necessarium propter vos.*—Phil. i. 22, 24. Did we but know Jesus as the Apostle knew Him, did we but understand what it is to possess God, the Infinite Good, we should desire, as did St. Paul, to be delivered from this body of death, that we might be free to go to Christ Jesus. But such knowledge and such desire can only be enjoyed when the heart is attached to Christ Jesus alone, so that with St. Paul we may say from the heart: "I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ."—Phil. i. 22, 24.

Therefore, when the saints sent up sighs to heaven, it was not because they were yearning to get rid of their

poverty, their contradictions, their humiliations, their labours, and their sufferings; all these pains, which they felt as keenly as we do, were, in their eyes, the only goods to be desired in this world, the only goods which Jesus sought for Himself, the only goods which merit heavenly glory. They were sighing for God.

St. Ignatius of Loyola often raised his eyes to the starry heavens, and from them passed to the consideration of the country of the blessed, sending up thither in advance, his sighs, his longings, and his tears, that they might tell Jesus, the King of Glory, how he was languishing with love for Him, and was being consumed with desire to be with Him. Thus did he strive to touch the Heart of Jesus, that he might be called to Him the sooner. Then casting his eyes upon this earth, it seemed so worthless, so despicable, he would exclaim: "Oh how vile this world appears when I contemplate heaven!"—*Quam sordet tellus, cum coelum aspicio!* And if the saint came in contact with some one who was afraid lest death might cut short a work as yet unfinished: "Is it possible," he would say, "that we can so delude ourselves as to desire to live longer, and thus deprive ourselves of the sweet hope, the sweetest we can have in this world, of dying soon! It is this hope which God wished should be ever fresh in our souls, by leaving us in ignorance of the hour of our death."

Such, then, have been the sighs of the saints, such should be our own sighs. To see God for ever—what blessedness! "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for them that love Him."

But, then, what purity of soul, what perfect detachment of heart do these dispositions suppose! With reason, indeed, did the author of the *Imitation* write: "And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative men, because there are few who know

how to separate themselves wholly from perishing and created things. For this a great grace is required, which may raise the soul and bear it up above itself."—*Lib. iii. cap. 31.*

God is the happiness of the saints in heaven, but what a great joy it will also be to see the company of the blessed, and, above all, the Queen of Saints! The sight of Mary gladdens all heaven. She is our Mother, yet we have never seen her. Ought we not, then, to sigh after her? Does not every child sigh for the happy moment when he shall see his Mother again?

Thus did St. Stanislaus, when a novice of the Society of Jesus, at the early age of eighteen, sigh to behold Mary.

She had always been for him a beloved Mother, and when one of his Brothers, wishing to draw from him the expression of his filial love, would ask him if he was much devoted to the Blessed Virgin, he always answered, "She is my Mother:" that meant all.

This child of heaven, who seemed like an angel gone astray on earth for awhile, experienced a great longing to spend the Feast of the Assumption, which was drawing near, with our Blessed Lady and in company with the saints. So, with the simplicity of a dove, and the artlessness of one not of this earth, he composed a letter to his Heavenly Mother, soliciting this favour. Did some angel brother of his bear it to its destination? No one knows, but this is certain, that the Blessed Virgin came, upon that very festival of the Assumption, to take her child with her to Paradise. How happy is he now at the side of his Mother! Let us love Mary as he did, that we in our turn may obtain the blessedness of being with her for ever.

II.

Blameless Christian Sighs.

The sighs of which we have been speaking are all sighs after heaven, sighs which proceed solely from a desire to be in heaven; but many other sighs come from the hearts of those who live in this world.

Truly, we have much reason to sigh in this sorrowful land of exile! How often may we not say to our Lady: "To thee do we send up our sighs." Independently of the prolonged duration of our banishment, there are three principal causes of our sighs and moans.

The first and chief is sin; the only real evil here below, and the most afflicting of all evils; for it is at once an injury to God whom it offends, and an injury to ourselves; because mortal sin both renders us miserable in this life and exposes us to eternal damnation in the next. O fatal blindness!

We weep over the loss of some temporal possession, and we do not shed one tear, nor breathe one sigh after having sinned grievously. We live at ease, even enjoy ourselves, and yet we might fall at any instant into eternal misery. If the slightest attack is made upon our reputation, we complain bitterly and are sorely distressed. If we lose one of our relatives we weep and refuse to be comforted. But after having sinned, after having covered Jesus with wounds, after having fastened the Son of God afresh to the cross by driving the nails through his heart, we can look composedly at our Crucified Saviour, and remain unmoved by his sufferings and death.

The second cause (which is also a very legitimate one) for our sighs, is, on the one hand, the violence of the assaults made against us by our passions, and, on the other hand, our weakness, which renders us liable at any moment to be overcome and cast into the abyss of hell.

And yet, too often, instead of mourning and dreading the danger, we love it, we seek it, we indulge the passions which flatter our fallen nature, and thus conspire with it in preparing for ourselves an eternity of woe.

The third cause is, the sufferings of this miserable life.

God does not reject the sighs which suffering wrings from us, provided only we resign ourselves to his holy will. The wicked who have no Christ to love, no heaven to hope for, grow rageful and kick against the goad of griefs and sufferings; whereas the just man will sigh and say with Jesus: "My God, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."—Matt. xxvi. 39. Then the Angel of God consoles and strengthens him.

When men are sincerely converted and resolved on giving themselves to God, they will experience, on their beginning to live in the spirit, a great compunction; they will weep and mourn over their sins.

Those who are making progress, and are exercising themselves seriously in the practice of virtue, sigh after perfection, and mourn the many faults and imperfections to which they are still prone, while fighting against the corruption of their nature.

The perfect and the saints, who have arrived at union with God, sigh and long mournfully, as did the Apostle St. Paul, for the moment which shall reunite them for ever to Christ Jesus.

This heaven-born wail of woe was that of Mary after she had witnessed the Ascension of her Son into heaven. During the remainder of her long exile, she languished with love, and sighing, said: "When shall I come and appear before Thy face?"—*Quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem tuam?*—Ps. xli. 3. It was of this love that she died. What else but divine love could have been found worthy to inflict death upon the Mother of Fair Love?

PRAYER.

O Mary! you who dwell in the brightness of the heavens, with what pitying eyes must you look upon us, poor blind mortals, who place all our happiness in the false and fleeting possessions of our place of banishment, and are so indifferent to the glory of heaven. I own that I am blind, but you are my Mother. O good and all-powerful Mother, you will surely banish the darkness which fills my soul. Teach me to despise all that must so soon come to an end, and to love that which has no ending. Teach me to sigh and mourn over my sins, which alone can cause me to lose heaven, which can alone make me eternally miserable, which are so great a subject of sorrow to the Heart of Jesus, and which pierce your true Mother's heart. Enlighten me, I beseech you; direct towards me one of those rays which come from the Heart of Jesus; let one spark of the fire which consumes that Heart, which is a burning furnace of love, fall upon my miserable heart, and so enkindle within me the fire of divine love, which may bear aloft all my desires to God. Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

THE MOURNING OF OUR MOST BLESSED MOTHER.

Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes.

“To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping ’

I.

We mourn in our banishment, but we have a Mother who has mourned more than ourselves in this same exile ; and her sorrows should console and encourage us in our sorrows.

Gemitus Matris tuæ ne obliviscaris.—“Forget not the groanings of thy Mother,” the Holy Spirit says to us.—Eccli. vii. 29. The subject, then, upon which we shall meditate to day, will be the mourning of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and our Mother also.

The Blessed Virgin is called by the Holy Church the “Queen of Martyrs,”—*Regina Martyrum, ora pro nobis*. Therefore she is also the Queen of Sorrows, and has suffered more than any of the martyrs of Jesus Christ.

Yet, Mary had not the same reasons for mourning and weeping that we have. Never, not even from the first instant of her conception, had she anything in common with sin.

In virtue of the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ, she was exempt from all stain of original sin. This is now an article of faith.

Never, either, throughout the whole course of her long life did she contract the least stain of actual sin.

Therefore, she had no sins to weep over except ours.

Never, moreover, as a consequence, did she commit the smallest imperfection, which could, in the most remote degree, render her displeasing, or less agreeable to the Divine Majesty, and it is for this reason that the Holy Spirit says to her: "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is no spot in thee."—*Tota pulchra es, Amica mea, et macula non est in te.*—Cant. iv. 7. Thus was she addressed from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, but if we consider that with God, positive purity is identified with his own substantial and infinite sanctity, what must the Holy Spirit have said to the Blessed Virgin when she entered heaven, adorned with a positive sanctity which surpassed the united sanctity of all the saints?

If Mary was in nowise subject to sin, neither has she inherited, with the rest of the children of Adam, concupiscence, which consists in the disorder of the passions, and the revolt of the senses; for, concupiscence is the natural, as it were, and permanent effect of original sin within the soul.

Hence, it follows that the most perfect order always reigned in the senses, in the heart, and in the soul of the Blessed Virgin.

Finally, not having been conceived in original sin, as we all have been, she did not enter into the world, in relation to God, as a child of wrath, but as an innocent and beloved child, clothed in all the charms of sanctifying grace.

It is, consequently, certain that as Mary had never contracted any stain of sin, none of the temporal pains of sin could touch her, in the form of chastisement; for, although God, in the loving designs of his Fatherly providence, may afflict and try the innocent, his justice can punish only such as are guilty of offence.

We see, then, that there are many causes for sorrow which do not affect the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son;

but, notwithstanding this, the most innocent and most Holy Virgin has mourned and has wept. With truth indeed, might she say in the words of Ruth: "Call me not Naomi, (that is Full of Beauty), but call me Marah, (that is Bitter), for the Almighty hath filled me with bitterness."—Ruth, i. 20. Yes, all lovely in her innocence, and all fair in her purity and sanctity, Mary had to suffer because she was destined to be the Mother of Jesus and our Mother; and as his Mother she suffered more than all the martyrs put together.

She had to suffer in order that she might become the Queen of Martyrs; for, how could the brilliant crown of the martyrs be wanting to her when she was destined to be Queen of all whosoever are crowned in heaven!

As a young virgin, her first years were passed in sweet tranquillity, within the courts of the Temple; but no sooner was the mystery of the Divine maternity accomplished in her—that mystery which made her at once the "Admirable Mother," the Maiden Mother—no sooner did she become associated with Jesus in the plan of the world's redemption, than the bitter and blood-stained tree of the cross began to cast its deep shadow of affliction across the pure course of her innocent life.

Hardly was the Divine Child born in Bethelhem, amid the discomforts of the greatest poverty, when the aged Prophet, divinely inspired, pierced the heart of Mary with a double thrust, one which went through the heart of Jesus, and one which pierced her own. "O holy Prophet! dost thou thus repay that best of Mothers, who has but now laid the Infant God in thy arms! Are there not as yet three and thirty years to roll by, before that tragedy of Calvary? Why thus early afflict and bruise the tender heart of an unfortunate Mother?" But God wills that it should be so; the Holy Spirit has spoken to the Prophet. It is necessary that, from this very day, Mary, already present by anticipation on Calvary, shall offer her Son, still an infant, for the sal-

vation of the world; it is necessary that, from to-day, she shall begin to fashion the crown which she is to wear as the Queen of Martyrs.

And thus Simeon, himself grieving with deepest grief at the sight of such a Son and such a Mother, obeys the Divine inspiration, and reveals the terrible, the heart-rending mystery. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and *for a sign which shall be contradicted*," and then, as if to accentuate the prophecy, he looked upon the Blessed Virgin, and added: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."—*Ecce positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur, et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius*.—Luke, ii. 34, 35.

Ah! the sharp steel had been already plunged into Mary's heart, for, as we see by the *Magnificat*, she knew the Sacred Scriptures; she had learned from the Prophets of the Passion and death of the Messias, and the sword will never be withdrawn from her heart until she enters into her glory. Mother and martyr: surely she might, at least, be permitted to enjoy in peace the company of her Beloved Son until the fatal hour was at hand! But scarcely had Simeon flashed the sword of Calvary for a moment before her eyes, than a bloodthirsty persecutor rises up to slay the Divine Infant in the cradle. She must fly; fly at once; fly amidst the terrors and the darkness of the midnight hour, to gain a strange, an unknown, an idolatrous country; and with no other companions in that cruel exile, than sorrow, anguish, and poverty. It is true Mary has Jesus with her, but although to see and to possess Him was her sweetest joy, it was, on the other hand, a martyrdom for her.

Could such a Mother contemplate the Divine Child, press Him in her arms, see Him increase in wisdom and grace, thus becoming more and more lovable, without feeling the love of her mother's heart increase

hour by hour? And as her love for Jesus grew greater—and ever greater—must not the sword of sorrow have penetrated deeper and deeper into that heart? Could she look on her Jesus, without the picture of the Passion, which the Prophets had painted to the life, rising before her eyes, and transforming the vehemence of her love into an unspeakable sorrow?

No one except a mother can form any idea of the martyrdom of that most afflicted of Mothers! Mary must have often said to herself, while contemplating Jesus: “And must all this really happen to Him, the most amiable of the children of men; a child clothed in all the graces of innocence and goodness, and full of all the charms of the Godhead? Jesus the blessed fruit of my womb! Is the day really to come when men, or, I should say rather, bloodthirsty monsters, shall fall upon Him, and bind Him as a malefactor, spit upon His face, blaspheming, cover Him with wounds, nail to the cross those hands which will never be raised but to bless, and those feet which will be tired and weary with seeking the wandering and wretched?”

But when the hour actually came: oh, God! what mother can imagine the sufferings of Mary beside the cross?

Oh, heart-rending sight!

Mary feels in her own mother's heart each blow of the hammer that drives the nails through the hands and feet of Jesus. She sees the executioners, as they raise the cross on which her Son is fastened all bleeding and wounded. She remains for three long hours, pale and motionless close beside her agonizing Son. She hears her Son's last cry, and receives his last breath. She sees the lifeless, bruised body of her Jesus, no longer to be recognised, laid upon her knees; and, at last, bathed in tears and half-unconscious from grief, she quits the tomb within which they have enclosed the Sacred Spoil, her Son Jesus.

Are we not, then, right when we affirm that the Blessed Virgin Mary, in her passage through life, has mourned and wept, and has merited the crown of the Queen of Martyrs? Therefore, let us not be surprised at her sorrows; let us not complain, because the most tender, the most loving of Mothers is treated thus. For Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer, must have had her share, with Him, in the salvation of the world. And the world could not have been saved without the expiation of suffering. Mary must, also, after Jesus, be the supreme Comforter of the Afflicted.

How could she know how to console, if she had not herself suffered—if she had not, with Jesus, drunk of the chalice of sorrow to the very dregs?

Can a heart which has not known suffering, know how to compassionate sorrow?

Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, knew that He could only give us courage by the sight of his own sufferings. He knew that a mother is no mother unless she has sorrowed; and so when He willed to give us Mary for our Mother, He chose that very time and moment in which her heart was pierced by a sword.

In truth, it is because Mary gave birth to us in such cruel anguish, that we have so much confidence in her; and that from our place of banishment we cry out to her in our distress—sighing, weeping, and mourning, in this vale of tears.

Again, how dear are we to this most afflicted Mother, when we lovingly recall to her remembrance all the sorrows she has gone through! How she delights then to give us relief in the midst of our own sufferings!

The devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows was always very dear to St. Ignatius.

From the time of his conversion, this privileged son and devoted servant of Mary, wore always upon his breast a picture of Our Lady of Dolours, pierced by

the sword. One day, in taking leave of a Father whom he was sending to a distant land, and whom he would never see again, he gave him this picture, as the most precious token of paternal love which he had it in his power to bestow.

Father Joachim Piccolomini was accustomed from his earliest childhood, as we read in his life by Rossignoli, to pay three visits daily to a Church in which there was a statue of Our Lady of Dolours, and every Saturday he abstained from all food in her honour, and rose at midnight to meditate on her sorrows.

In order to show him how agreeable this devotion was to her, Mary appeared to him and bade him enter an Order consecrated to her service. This command he obeyed. Towards the end of his life, the Blessed Mother appeared to him again, bearing in her hand two crowns; one was made of rubies, this was the reward of the compassion he had always felt for her sorrows; the other was of pearls, and this was the reward of his chastity.

Finally, at the approach of the hour of his death, Mary appeared once more to her faithful servant, who then asked of her the favour of dying on the same day on which Jesus had died.

The Blessed Virgin replied: "Be prepared then; for, to-morrow, Friday, you will die suddenly, according to your wish; and to-morrow, also, you will be with me in Paradise."

Upon the morrow, which was the Friday of Holy Week, when, in singing the Passion from the Gospel of St. John, they came to the words, "And there stood by the cross of Jesus, his Mother," John, xix. 25, the Religious began his death agony; and as they were singing: "And bowing his head He gave up the ghost:" *et inclinato capite tradidit spiritum*: John, xix. 30; the soul of this holy Father passed away to God. At the same time the church was filled with a brilliant light and a most sweet odour.

The following are two instances of conversion, due to devotion to our Lady of Dolours.

Father Raviglione, of the Society of Jesus, relates the case of a young man who had the pious custom of making a daily visit to a statue of Mary, the Mother of Dolours, the heart of which had seven swords in it. One night the youth was so unhappy as to fall into mortal sin. When morning came, he went, as usual to pay a visit to the holy statue, but to his horror he perceived that instead of seven, there were now eight swords, and, as he looked, a voice said: "It is your sin which has plunged this new sword into the heart of your Mother!"

Moved to repentance and grieved to the heart, the young man hastened at once to make his confession, and to recover the lost grace of God; which he was able to do in recompense of his devotion to our Lady of Dolours.

Jules C. . . . had been brought up by a pious mother, and during his early youth gave a bright example of piety; but nothing was so noticeable as his great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and the confidence he placed in her. He had consecrated himself to her, and his happiest moments were those in which he could pour out all the secrets of his heart to his dear Mother in heaven.

He recited the Rosary daily, and never refused an alms which was asked in Mary's name. Being possessed of unusual talent, he had finished his course of studies at an early age, and then the moment came in which he was to be separated from his mother, in order to follow some career in Paris.

Upon the day of his departure, Jules paid a last visit to his beloved little chapel of our Lady of Dolours, and kneeling there consecrated himself anew to Mary, and conjured her never to abandon him.

Poor youth! little did he know how the too-often

fatal atmosphere of liberty, and the influence of evil example, would affect himself.

For a long time he resisted the contagion very faithfully ; but little by little he was led astray by his associates, and neglecting the sacraments, he ended by becoming forgetful of God, and leaving off, one by one, all his exercises of piety. Once arrived at this point, the descent was rapid, and the abyss was reached. The rosary that had formerly been so dear to him, now brought him nothing but remorse of conscience ; one night he threw it into the Seine. However, he could not persuade himself to give up one good habit, and that was to say a Hail Mary every day before he went to bed.

For several years Jules remained in this unhappy state ; but his good Mother in heaven was watching him all the time, and her heart yearned over this prodigal son.

One day on his way to pay a visit to his parents, he had to pass by the little chapel, which, in his boyhood, he had loved so much, and which was not far from his home. On the steps of the porch a child was sitting, who asked an alms of him, for the love of the Blessed Virgin. It was a little Savoyard, who, worn out by want and weariness, and not having strength enough to go further, had sunk down there by the chapel of Mary, because he remembered that his mother, before she died, had confided him to the protection of the Blessed Virgin.

Jules had a kind heart, and he was moved to pity by the recital of so sad a tale. And then the child had pleaded the love of Mary, and, in past days, Jules had never refused an entreaty in her name. He took the child with him to the house of his parents, and having satisfied the cravings of his hunger and provided him with warm clothing, he gave the poor boy a small sum of money.

The child could scarcely speak for gratitude and joy, but suddenly his eyes shone as if he had received an inspiration, and in token of his gratitude he took from his neck a little glass rosary which his mother had put round it when she embraced him for the last time, and offered it to his benefactor. It was his only treasure.

Jules accepted it with a smile, and the child went on his way, praying that the Virgin might reward one who had shown him so much kindness.

Charity and prayer were now to triumph. The following night the young man could not sleep; a succession of pictures kept presenting themselves to his mind: the little chapel of our Lady of Dolours; the child crouching there and asking, in innocent accents, an alms for the love of Mary; the rosary which seemed sent to take the place of the one which he had thrown into the river Seine—all these he thought over during those hours of sleeplessness. And then came the remembrance of the days when he had been so happy in the service of Jesus and Mary, till he could hold out no longer. He, whom Mary had loved so much, was now so deeply stained by sin, and Mary was so good, so kind! He burst into tears and sobbed very bitterly; in that moment Jules was converted.

When morning dawned he said his rosary, and then going to confession began to lead another life; he persevered in the pious resolutions made that day, and his high position in the world helped him to do a great deal of good before the day of his death came.—*Garland of Mary.*

PRAYER.

Oh, Mary, Queen of Martyrs! who gave birth to me in the life of grace at the foot of the cross, during the agony of your Divine Son, never allow me to be so unhappy as to pierce again your heart by my sins. Rather let me die than do so! Teach me also, you who have

suffered so much and with so much love, to bear with filial resignation all the troubles of this life. Alas! I have more than deserved them by my iniquities. I desire to suffer in union with Jesus, crucified for me, and with yourself, oh, most afflicted Mother! From this moment I offer myself without reserve to receive every cross which God may please to send me. I only ask of you, my Mother! to help me always to conform my will to the most holy and most amiable will of God. Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

THIS WORLD IS A VALLEY OF TEARS.

Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrymarum valle.

“To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping
in this valley of tears.”

What must the heart of our heavenly Mother feel when she sees her children in exile, in a world which groans under a curse, addressing to her their cries of distress from the valley of tears?

The poor exile, far away from his home, lifts his tearful eyes to heaven, and seeing his Mother seated on a throne of glory, seems to say to her: “Oh, Mother, you are in heaven, all glorious and all happy, and we, your poor children are suffering here below, in this place of tears and sorrow. Can you not cast upon us one glance of mercy?” Such is the eloquence of a sorrowing and loving soul, and what heart could resist it? Certainly not the heart of Mary! Whilst we meditate on the prayers of the Church, do we not feel that the Holy Ghost is breathing into them; and that, in union with us, He is praying, according to the words of the Sacred Scriptures, with “unspeakable groanings.”

I.

This Earth is a Valley and man is a Pilgrim.

The earth is a valley. "A valley of tears:" that is the name of this land of ours, of our place of exile. A valley is a lowly spot, shut in by mountains; often it is intersected by rapid and muddy streams, which work havoc and destroy, but often also these streams render it fruitful, even by their overflow. Here we have an image of this world: this lowly plain, from which the exile lifts his eyes to the holy hills and heights of heaven. "I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me." *Levavi oculos meos in montes unde veniet auxilium mihi.*—Ps. cxx. 1: And "Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord." *De Profundis clamavi ad te Domine.*—Ps. cxxiv. 1.

The temporal evils which we have deserved by reason of our sins, all our temptations, sufferings, sicknesses, and death, are the devastating torrents which fall from the avenging cataracts of heaven, to punish the guilty earth.

Yet, these same torrents, by the gracious influence of the Sun of Justice, render the sterile soil fruitful, and cause it to produce a rich harvest for the everlasting years. There will be no reaping to be done upon the heavenly mountain-tops; the time of work and of merit will have gone by.

In hell, too, which is not a valley, but a bottomless pit, much less can there be any reaping of the harvest; there is only weeping and despair. "Time is no more in which we may do penance:"—*tempus non erit amplius.*—Apoc. x. 16: there is no more redemption: *in inferno nulla est redemptio.*—*Off. Def.* It is the valley alone that can be rendered fertile, and in this

the conditions, and at the same time the riches of our exile. "Going they went and wept, casting their seeds," says the Psalmist: *euntes ibant et flebant, mittentes semina sua.*—Ps. cxxv. 6, 7.

Now is the time for labour and suffering; after will come joy and the glory. A day will come when those who have sown in tears shall reap in joy, and return bearing their sheaves in their arms. "But coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves:" *Venientes venient cum exultatione, portantes manipulos suos.*—Ps. cxxv. 7. While we await this blissful ending, our path lies in this earthly valley.

Man, here below, is, in reality, a pilgrim travelling, by difficult paths, across a strange and unfriendly country to reach his native land.

The holy King David said unto God: "I am a stranger before Thee, and a pilgrim as were all my fathers."—*Advena ego sum apud te et peregrinus, sicut omnes patres mei.* And when about to die, he exclaimed, in the presence of his people and princes assembled together: "O God, we are sojourners before Thee and strangers as were all our fathers:" adding "Our days upon earth are as a shadow, and there is no stay."—*Dies nostri quasi umbra super terram, et non est mora.*—Paralip. xxix. 15.

Yes! we are pilgrims. What weariness, what persecutions, what disappointments, what sufferings accompany us in our brief pilgrimage! "Man living for a short time is filled with many miseries," holy Job has told us.—*Homo brevi vivens tempore, repletur multis miseriis.*—Job, xiv. 1. Like a flower he appears for a day, and is soon, like a flower, trodden under foot. Man's passage is like the shadow that vanishes away; he is fraught with changes, and even in the valley of his habitation, when he finds himself a grave, it is watered by a few tears and then soon forgotten.

In another place, Job, that man of many sorrows, exclaimed: "Suffer me, O God, that I may lament my sorrow a little, before I go and return no more, to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death; a land of misery and darkness where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth."—*Dimitte ergo me, ut plangam paululum dolorem meum antequam vadam, et non revertar, ad terram tenebrosam et opertam mortis caligine; terram miserie et tenebrarum, ubi umbra mortis et nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabitat.*—Job, x. 20, 22.

II.

The Valley of Tears.

The earth is a valley of tears; it is a valley where one generation succeeds after another to water it with their tears. But these tears are far from being all of one kind; it is with them as it is with water. Some waters are turbid and muddy, while others are pure and limpid.

Thus, some tears are sinful tears. These spring from anger, revenge, pride, despair, and other inordinate passions. There are tears which humiliate us; such as those which are shed from weakness of spirit and lack of courage. Lastly, there are some tears which we may shed without dishonour: tears of innocence, and holy tears, because they spring from a blessed source. These are the tears which goodness and virtue cause to flow; the tears of divine love, of charity, of repentance, of resignation in affliction. It is of such Christ spoke when He said: "Blessed are they that weep, for they

shall be comforted.”—*Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.*—Matt. v. 5.

1° *The tears of charity.* Blessed are the children of charity, the true children of God, who weep for the sorrows of their brethren. It is a noble act, no doubt, to give clothing to the naked, comfort to the forsaken, food to the hungry; but it is better, by far, to weep with the unfortunate while we relieve their wants, and to give to the soul, more even than to the body, the help and consolations of religion, which, like God, is charity. “God is charity.”—*Deus charitas est.*—1 John, iv. 16.

What, however, shall we say of tears shed over the scandals of wandering sinners, and the sufferings of the Church? What shall we say of tears like those which St. Monica shed, during eighteen years, while she was praying for the conversion of St. Augustine, her son?

2° *The tears of Divine love.* Blessed are they who weep under the influence of Divine love. O sweet and mysterious tears! for they are a mystery to those whose hearts have never risen above this world. The sensual man, the worldly man, does not even “perceive those things that are of the spirit of God.”—*Animalis homo non percipit ea quæ sunt spiritus Dei.*—1 Cor. ii. 14.

It is only when a person gives himself sincerely to God that he sheds these tears, and if they are sent from God as a Divine consolation, that person will feel his soul burning with love, so that he can never again love created things, apart from God. For what are these but as so much filth, when seen in the light of the infinite beauty which illumines his soul? Such a one feels within himself a sweet peace, which takes the place of the vain and miserable joys of this world; a peace which the Scripture tells us “surpasseth all understanding”: *Pax quæ exsuperat omnem sensum.*—Phil. iv. 7; a peace which the world cannot give, nor does it even know what it is. The Christian who has once

felt it, recognises this, and an altogether divine unction fills him with an indescribable sweetness ; so that he no longer has any taste for other things, and with St. Francis of Assisi, embracing the crucifix, he cries : “ My God and my All.”—*Deus meus, et omnia.*

These precious tears may proceed from the feelings of God’s infinite perfections and the benefits He bestows on us ; from an ardent love of Christ, and the contemplation of his sufferings ; from a sense of our ingratitude and sinfulness towards so loving and so neglected a God. The tears of repentance are the only tears, shed in God’s service, in which there is any bitterness ; and because they are bitter on his account, He fills them with hidden sweetness, which increases ever in proportion to their bitterness.

We may be sure that a great and deep joy mingled itself with the repentant tears which flowed down the cheeks of St. Peter, whenever he heard the crowing of the cock ; tears which, by degrees, made deep furrows in them.

And very sweet, too, were the tears that St. Ignatius shed at the altar when offering the Holy Sacrifice, at the sight of the Lamb of God, immolating Himself anew by the hands of his servant. For when penetrated with the sense of God’s unspeakable love for us men, he cried, in a rapture of love : “ Oh, my God ! my God ! if men only knew Thee, they would never offend Thee ! ”

But of all tears, those most agreeable to Jesus Christ are the tears that are shed at the remembrance of a Saviour suffering, steeped in shame, scourged, crucified, dying for us. These tears are gathered up by the angels, like the tears shed by Jesus in the Garden of Olives, and by them carried up to heaven, as pearls of great price that are to possess an eternal beauty.

One tear shed over the Passion of Jesus Christ, so a saint has told us, is of greater value in God’s sight than the severest bodily mortifications. What a beautiful picture is that of St. Aloysius, holding in his hands the

crucifix, which was his only treasure when he became a Religious, and which he watered with his tears! What, then, above all, shall we say of the tears which silently flowed from Mary's eyes at the foot of the cross, or of those which fell in floods upon the lifeless body of her Divine Son?

Surely Christians would become more attached to devotion to the Passion of Christ, surely they would have a greater reverence for the Stations of the Cross, did they but know how Jesus will one day console those who have so often given Him consolation by recalling to mind, during the Holy Mass and in Holy Communion, his shame and sufferings, or by watering with their tears that way of the cross which he watered with his blood! "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted."—*Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur.*—Matt. v. 5.

3° *The tears of resigned affliction.* Blessed, also, are they who weep beneath the weight of the sufferings of this life, provided only that they abandon themselves with resignation, or better still, with love, to the holy will of God. Certainly the Lord God does not forbid us to weep (for He has given us a heart most sensitive to feeling, and has placed in our eyes two wells of tears), when we are smitten by some sharp stroke of affliction.

He does not forbid a son to let his tears flow upon the lifeless form of a beloved father or mother. He does not forbid a mother to weep for the death of the child who was the joy and sunshine of her life.

He does not forbid anyone who is wearied out by frightful temptations, or burdened by some heavy cross, to come and weep at his feet.

St. Monica had long wept for her son, Augustine. When this holy mother expired in the arms of her son, who had become, after so many tears, a bishop, a doctor of the Church, and a saint—was it not allowable for

him in his turn to shed abundant tears for so good and tender a mother ?

Let him speak for himself. He tells us that he did not consider it was fitting that he should break forth in sobs and cries of grief at the death of so holy a mother. Yet at the thought of this servant of God, who had served him by a life of filial and holy love, at the remembrance of all that so kind a mother had done for him, he became of a sudden so affected by the sense of the void her death would make in his heart, that his tears began to flow, and he wept over her, and for her. And should anyone, he writes, consider that he was in fault in weeping for some time as he gazed upon his mother lying dead in his sight,—a mother who during so many years had wept over him that she might bring him back to life—"Let not such a one," he asks, "ridicule this weakness of my heart. But, let him rather, if he be a man of noble charity, let him weep for my sins against Thee, O God, who art the Father of all the brethren of Thy Christ."—*Confessions*, chap. ix.

4° *The tears of Jesus.* Was the heart of Christ void of emotion—were his eyes tearless? No, indeed! How we love to think of the eyes of Jesus watching with tenderness the tears of Martha and Mary, as they were telling Him that their brother was dead! How we love to look at Jesus standing near the tomb of Lazarus, troubling himself, feeling his heart melting within Him, and bursting into tears!

How we love to contemplate Jesus, with his face bathed in tears, announcing to ungrateful Jerusalem the judgments which that wicked city was drawing down upon itself!

How we love to see Jesus, in the presence of the widow of Naim, when she was following the corpse of her son to its last resting-place, touched by the grief of the poor mother, and raising her son to life again, and saying: "Weep not."—Luke, vii. 11.

In his Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul shows us Jesus upon the cross shedding, not blood alone, but tears also, at the moment when He uttered the cry which immediately preceded the death of Him, "Who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears offered up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death."—Heb. v. 7. Did not those tears of Jesus, dying on the cross, touch the heart of his Heavenly Father? And are we not also God's children by adoption? When God looks down upon us—upon us, who are made in his likeness, and who are the brethren of Jesus Christ—suffering, weeping, bearing our cross with Jesus, and striving, like Jesus, to be resigned and submissive even unto death, can He remain insensible to our tears? Surely not! That religion which, in order to console us in this valley of tears, gave us the Heart of Jesus—the most feeling, the most afflicted of all hearts—does not condemn our tears or our strong emotion. It ennobles and sanctifies them by an heroic and filial abandonment to the Divine Will; it makes them, we may dare to say, divine by uniting them to the tears and sufferings of Christ crucified, and it sweetens them by showing us the crucifix.

The cross alone and without Jesus—that is the portion of those who do not possess God. And the cross without Jesus has power only to cause the flow of unhallowed tears, and to draw forth from the heart a cry of despair. Miserable are they who have not with their crosses the company of the Crucified One!

With the crucifix we can bear all; beneath the cross of Jesus, tears will be changed into consolation, because they touch the Heart of Jesus, and recall to Him the tears that Mary shed upon his lifeless body: Mary, his holy Mother and our Mother too. Still more do they remind Him of the tears He beheld her shedding during his agony upon the Cross, tears which were the cause of some of the keenest of his sufferings.

PRAYER.

Oh Mary, my good Mother! at the sight of your tears and the tears of your Divine Son, I will complain no more of the sufferings which, alas! I have merited by my sins; I will accept them with resignation and with love. But deign, in union with Jesus, to sanctify these tears of my exile, and obtain for me, from the afflicted, yet resigned Heart of your Divine Son, the grace to abandon myself wholly, at the foot of the cross, to the most holy, most just, most amiable will of God. Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION

THE BLINDNESS OF THOSE WHO SEEK FOR HAPPINESS IN
THIS VALLEY OF TEARS.

Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrymarum valle.

“To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping
in this vale of tears.”

I.

*Sin has driven us forth from the terrestrial Paradise and
cast us into this Valley of tears.*

To-day we will turn our eyes away from the Mother of sorrows to fix them upon ourselves, or rather, we will consider how by our blindness and our delusions we become the cause of sorrow in Mary, our Mother.

This earth is a valley of tears. We have already convinced ourselves of this.

But did God create it on purpose that it should be a valley of tears?

God had intended to prepare for man—who is the masterpiece of his hands and of his heart—something more than a palace in which he might be able to shed honourable tears. But it is man himself who has spoiled God's work.

Before creating man, God had prepared for him a

palace planned upon the pattern of heaven; and man would have dwelt there in happiness if he had remained firm in the state in which God had made him. He would have had his abode always in the earthly paradise, the gate of which opened into heaven, and in which were figured the beauties of the Eternal Paradise; for it was a Garden of Delight, as the Scriptures call it. But man, in losing Original Justice by sin, effaced, as far as it lay in his power, the image of God within his soul. From that time, deprived of all his newly-granted rights, he could not continue to inhabit the terrestrial paradise, which was the image of and the approach to the dwelling of that God whose child he had ceased to be. Driven from this abode of happiness by his rebellion against God, and all his tastes perverted, he was cast forth amidst the lower animals, which, in their turn, revolted against him, to dwell in a world which was to prove for him nothing but a valley of tears. Tears were unknown in the earthly paradise, the innocent inhabitants of that blessed abode knew nothing of that threefold concupiscence which is the source of nearly all the tears that flow. In Paradise inclemency of weather and climate was unknown, there was no sickness, no sorrow, nor any of the many scourges which now trouble mankind. The body of man, without being essentially and by nature immortal, was by the Divine Will and Goodness, not subject to death; for the fruit of the Tree of Life planted in Paradise by the Author of life, maintained man in perpetual youth, and preserved him from the attacks of death. But having, at the instigation of the evil spirit, coveted the knowledge of good and evil, man partook of the forbidden fruit of the tree which gave knowledge, and became acquainted with both sin and death. Cast into banishment, he was condemned to suffer in it and to die in it; happy only inasmuch as by the promise of a Redeemer, he would be saved from hell, where also tears are shed,

but bitter burning tears that will be shed fruitlessly for all eternity.

For long years man watered, with his tears, the sorrowful land in which his sin had cast him; for long years he cried aloud to heaven, begging for the promised Redeemer.

At length, the Saviour of the world came down from heaven, and men saw their God made man like unto themselves; born, as they, of one of Eve's daughters; weeping with them, dying with them, buried as they are buried in the valley of tears.

Men saw the holy Mother of their Saviour weep as He wept, die as He died, and like Him buried in this valley of tears.

From that happy moment, tears became a consolation, often even a joy, and the gift of tears was reckoned one of heaven's best blessings.

II.

The blindness of Christians.

But, alas! how many there are even among those who call themselves Christians, who have yet to learn, though a God died weeping on the cross, that this world is but a valley of tears!

Although they feel and deplore the miseries of this world, they still persuade themselves that it is possible to make of it a garden of delight, just as though a change had not been wrought in it by sin. Vain hope! The earthly paradise disappeared on the day when the Cherubim, armed with a sword of fire, guarded the entrance. The life of fallen man upon earth can no longer be anything but a time of expiation; this world

has become for just and wicked alike, do what we will, only a valley of tears watered by the floods of tribulation.

The author of the *Imitation of Christ* perfectly explained this inevitable condition of our nature when he wrote: "The cross, therefore, is always ready and always awaiteth thee. Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for, whithersoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and always thou shalt find thyself. Turn thyself upwards, turn thyself downwards, turn thyself without or turn thyself within thee; everywhere thou shalt find the cross. Thou errest, thou errest, if thou seekest any other thing than to suffer tribulations; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries and all signed around with crosses."

The Christian knows this. The Holy Scripture and the Doctors of the Church are continually inculcating the same lesson, and, notwithstanding, he obstinately continues to seek happiness here below, and he tries to shun expiation. This is nothing but a species of madness, and is one of the consequences of sin.

Man, blinded by concupiscence, closes his eyes to the light of Divine truth, and persists in seeking his happiness where God has assured us we shall only find matter for tears.

That which alone can give us true happiness in this world—the cross of Jesus Christ—we shun as an evil. When our Lord wished to enlighten a certain holy woman, who was very dear to Him, He gave her this practical rule: "Let that which men call sweet, be bitterness to you; and that sweet which men call bitterness."

III.

The happiness of those who renounce themselves.

The man who lives the life of the senses, finds in the pursuit of that which is pleasant to his corrupted nature nothing but emptiness, weariness, disappointment, remorse, and, at times, even despair. The just man, on the contrary, he who lives by the spirit—he who seems to treat himself as an enemy while obeying God's voice in the spirit of faith, finds peace and true happiness in the mortification of his flesh and his senses, in order that he may follow the light alone of reason and of truth. He cannot do otherwise. It is God and not the devil who seeks our good. Who is it that tries to captivate our senses by the seductions of the world? It is none other than he who, through our first parents, caused the destruction of us all, and who is all the more anxious to destroy us a second time, because we have been ransomed by Christ. Satan is our principal, our implacable enemy, and if he flatters us by things which appear pleasant, it is only that he may treacherously drive the dagger into our hearts. Those only escape his wiles who refuse to listen to his seductive voice, and make war against their senses; and whilst they thus seem to resign themselves to a life of mourning and weeping in this valley of tears, and are regarded as fools by worldlings, they find, to their great consolation, a sweet and secret happiness, because they have found a heart that can change bitterness into sweetness; namely, the Heart of Jesus, the most loving of hearts, and the source of happiness on earth as well as in heaven.

And it was this Sacred Heart which Mary found on the morning of the resurrection. That most afflicted of Mothers, crucified with her Divine Son, had passed three days with her heart pierced, her eyes swollen with weeping, refusing all consolations that she might share

in the sorrows, and bury herself in the wounds of Jesus; but what were her feelings when the Heart of Jesus risen, was beating again with burning love against her Mother's heart? "According to the multitude of my sorrows have my consolations abounded."—Ps. xciii. 19. Thus does Jesus console the victorious children of the cross; what, then, will that consolation be the moment after our death?

IV.

The misery and folly of Christians who allow themselves to be fascinated by the things of this world.

Most unhappy—on the contrary—most miserable, are they who ask for happiness in a valley of exile and of tears. They hope to find happiness in satisfying their ambition and pride; they weary themselves out in striving after honours and dignities; no sooner do they gain what they sought than they discover it is not what they hoped for, and so they aim higher and higher still, until they drop into the grave, where all worldly glory is for ever swallowed up. "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity," except the love and service of God.—Eccl. i. 2.

They flatter themselves that they will find happiness in adding wealth to wealth; they toil, they wear themselves out, they waste away, until they leave to their long-expectant, and at length satisfied, heirs to their property, the fortune which they have succeeded in amassing by such unremitting effort, and even at the price of their immortal souls; and then they go down into the tomb, clothed with the sere-cloth of the dead. "Vanity of vanities and all is vanity, except to love and serve God."

They trust to find happiness in surrounding themselves with the comforts and luxuries of life; they run after pleasures, and plunge themselves into all the filth of sensuality; but their leisure hours are filled with the loathings of satiety, they are delivered over to the pangs of the most stinging remorse; they are the prey of the shame and the despair of their degradation, until the time comes for their pampered bodies to descend into the grave, to become, first the food of worms, and afterwards the fuel of flames that cannot be extinguished.

And sometimes these blind and unhappy dupes go on calling themselves Christians, or in other words, the disciples of Jesus Crucified! Do they not know that Jesus never would have any of the things they so much covet; that He never even tasted of such pleasures for an instant; that He condemned the false joys which they incessantly pursue? Do they not know that this God who was born in a stable, and who, when grown up, often had not where to lay his head, has said: "Woe," not happiness, "to you rich."—*Vae vobis divitibus*.—Luke, vi. 24. That Jesus who gave Himself up to the cross, from Bethlehem to Calvary, has said to the voluptuaries of earth: "Woe to you that now laugh,"—*Vae vobis qui ridetis*—"for you shall mourn and weep".—Luke, vi. 25. That to his own disciples He said: "You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice, and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."—*Plorabitis et flebitis vos, mundus autem gaudebit, vos autem contristabimini, sed tristitia vestra convertetur in gaudium*.—John, xvi. 20. That Jesus, steeped in shame and humiliations said to those who wished to follow Him: "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls."—*Discite a me quia mitis sum, et humilis corde, et invenietis requiem animabus vestris*.—Matt. xi. 29.

That is the teaching of the Master. Now is not he

alone called a disciple, who listens to, who knows, and who practises the doctrine of his Master? Is not a Christian one who thinks, who loves, and wishes in union with Jesus Christ? It is surely necessary, if we would really follow Christ, to renounce all that the world esteems and seeks after; to wear the livery of our Saviour, which is the badge of humiliation and suffering; to carry our cross, and be looked upon as crucified in the eyes of the world. Truly we forget the teaching of the God made Man. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."—*Qui vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum, tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me.*—Matt. xvi. 24.

The world calls those happy on whom all things seem to smile; those whom fortune favours; those who are loaded with praise and honour; those who being freed from all suffering, and sheltered from all reverses, pass their days without weariness, and find pleasure strewn upon their path.

Let us now hear the judgment of Christ, who cannot err, and who enlightens us because He loves us. "Blessed are the poor in spirit Blessed are they that mourn Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice. . . . Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."—Matt. v. 3.

Notice Christ's words. He does not say: "Blessed are all those who suffer and all those that are persecuted;" but "those who carry the cross 'after me,' and who suffer all kind of outrages for 'my sake.'"*Propter me.*

It is certain that all suffer, and those suffer most of all who seek to shun the cross. We may strive against it, but we must suffer during this life; we can no more escape from suffering than we can from death; it is the

necessary consequence of our being sinners and of God being just. The spiritual man knows this and submits the more readily whilst he beholds his God expiating the sins of the world amid the horrible torments of his crucifixion ; whilst he sees the sword of sorrow piercing the heart of the most innocent and most loving of Mothers ; whilst he considers those thousands and thousands of martyrs who have reached heaven by passing through the deep waters of tribulation ; he accepts the law of suffering in a spirit of penance and love. And then the unction of grace and heavenly consolations come to alleviate and soothe his sorrows ; he passes through life courageously bearing his cross, waiting for the moment when God shall dry his tears for ever, and admit him to that eternal home where “death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow.”—Apoc. xxi. 4.

The sinner, on the contrary, who has preferred this earth to heaven, and his own interests to those of God, will suffer in despite of himself. He will suffer much and have no consolation in his suffering ; it will be without any merit, as it is without spirit of expiation and of penance ; suffering to him will bring nothing but bitterness. Thus do the damned suffer in hell.

The Holy Ghost, himself, paints a picture for us, in the Book of Wisdom, of the folly, even in this world, of those who will end by damning themselves in the world to come, as well as of their despair when buried in hell. *Coronemus nos rosis, antequam marcescant, nullum pratum sit quod non pertranseat luxuria nostra. Nemo nostrum exorsit luxuriæ nostræ, ubique relinquamus signa lætitiæ, quoniam hæc est pars nostra et hæc est sors.*—“Come,” they say, “let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered ; let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury, let us everywhere leave tokens of joy ; for this is our portion, and this is our lot.”—Wis. ii. 6, 9. But the day will come when seeing the triumph of the just and

of the children of the cross, they will cry out, repenting too late and fruitlessly : *Hi sunt quos habuimus aliquando in derisum et in similitudinem impropertii. Nos insensati vitam illorum æstimabamus insaniam, et finem eorum sine honore. Ecce quomodo computati sunt inter filios Dei, et inter sanctos sors illorum est. Ergo erravimus a via veritatis, et justitiæ lumen non luxit nobis, et sol intelligentiæ non est ortus nobis. Lassati sumus in via iniquitatis et perditionis, et ambulavimus vias difficiles, viam autem Domini ignoravimus.*—"These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore, we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of justice hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known."—Wis. v. 3, 7.

Jesus Christ has told us only of two roads, and they lead in exactly opposite directions ; one leads to life, the other to death ; the first is narrow and painful, the second is broad and easy. He has told us also that we cannot serve two masters at one and the same time, and that we cannot, consequently, expect that both will recompense us. These two masters, enemies and irreconcilable enemies, are God and the world. Those who serve the world, serve a traitor who will damn them eternally, after having deceived them, and make them wretched here below. Those who renounce the world to serve God, have a Master who consoles them during their exile, and will bestow on them happiness which knows no ending.

"Oh ! how the saints have suffered," cries out the Church in the Office for the Martyrs, "to gain the palm of glory !"

All the saints have suffered.

Yet, how sweet were their tears : often they were as a foretaste of heaven.

When some sinner, who has even passed his life in the sins which he called pleasures, becomes touched by grace, is won back by mercy and returns to God ; when in his filial sorrow he melts into tears, does he not feel happier shedding these tears at the foot of a priest, than he was during the long course of his wanderings ?

Oh, how good is God ! how truly is He called the Good God, since He changes even the bitterness of repentance into unspeakable sweetness !

A young Tyrolese shepherdess, of our own times, may teach us how to despise the things of this world in order to gain treasure in heaven, and may prove to us that the blood of an Agnes, an Agatha, and a Lucy, has not ceased to flow in the veins of the Church.

Some years ago, in one of the lovely valleys which lie between Inspruck and Milan, a young girl was tending a flock of goats. While busy with her needle-work she was singing a hymn to the Virgin Mary, her patroness, after whom she had been named.

Presently a carriage, which was being driven along the road, drew up close to where she was sitting. The door was opened and the occupants listened in astonishment : after a few minutes a gentleman, who was accompanied by a lady, got down from the carriage. They approached nearer and nearer to the young singer, and keeping themselves concealed behind the shrubs, listened in silent rapture to the sounds she was pouring forth. When she had finished the hymn, they went straight up to the young girl.

“ Will you take us to see your parents ? ” said the gentleman, addressing her.

“ I would, willingly, sir, but I have no one to leave in charge of my goats, ” was the answer.

"Never mind your goats, my good girl. If you do what I tell you, I promise you that in a short time you shall become a rich lady."

"What do you mean, sir?" said Mary, who drew back a few steps, on hearing these words.

"Do not be alarmed, my child. You have one of the finest voices that I have ever heard. You shall be the first singer in the theatre of Milan, of which I am the director. Perhaps you do not know that such a position will make you rich and happy for the rest of your life."

"I guess what a singer is," said the girl, "but I will not have anything to do with a theatre. I know that it is a place where people very often lose their souls, and destroy the souls of other people. Thank you for your offer, sir, but I hope my holy patroness will always give me the courage to prefer the salvation of my soul to all the riches of the world."

The director became silent from vexation and surprise, for he had expected to see her transported with joy; he could not understand how any girl in her senses could refuse a fortune which seemed suddenly to fall from the sky into her lap, and he was utterly at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the motive which the girl had adduced for her refusal of his offer.

"You had better think the matter over," he answered. "My proposal is well worth considering. It would give you a brilliant position, which most would envy. You would have diamonds and carriages. Every one would pay court to you. Do you refuse all this?"

"Yes, I refuse it all," said Mary. "My soul is of more value than all these things. I will not offend God nor displease the Blessed Virgin. I have nothing more to add, sir."

"But do you understand what a most rare talent you are burying in this out of the way place?"

"I know I have a fine voice, for people have often

told me so. But God gave it to me, and I am not going to turn his gift against Himself. I mean to sing no one's praises except the praises of Jesus and of my heavenly Mother."

The manager of the theatre went away angry and disappointed, but he had no intention of giving up his purpose without another effort, for he knew he could make a fortune out of that voice.

He succeeded, therefore, in discovering the girl's parents, and paid a visit to their humble cottage. They were simple folk, and his promises dazzled them; so when Mary came home she found that an agreement had been come to, and that she had been made over to the Impresario. She wept and entreated, but to no purpose; her mother told her she should be taken by force if she would not go willingly, and two hours were given her to think the matter over and dress herself for her journey.

Going to her little room, Mary knelt at the feet of a statue of the Blessed Virgin and began to pray. After a short time she rose up calm and happy, for she had made her resolve.

Some one had once told her that when the front teeth are lost, the voice is entirely spoiled; she now made up her mind to turn this information to good account. Going to the window she broke two of her front teeth against the corner of the window ledge, and then went downstairs.

"Now, sir, do you still wish to take me with you?" she said, going up to the director of the theatre.

The only answer he made was to hurry back to his carriage: but in spite of his disappointment, he could not refrain from expressing his admiration of the girl's courage and firmness. As for the parents, their eyes also were now opened, and they saw their mistake. At the sight of such an heroic deed, their minds, which had been disturbed by the sudden prospect of so much

wealth, returned to their former state, and they blessed God, while clasping their daughter to their arms, with feelings of repentance and reverence.

In her simple life, Mary continues to sing hymns to her beloved Patroness, and though her voice has lost much of its sweetness, it has become much more pleasing to the holy angels and the Blessed Virgin.

PRAYER.

Oh, Mary, you who have passed through this life as the Mother of Sorrows, have pity upon my blindness. You had never sinned, you were the immaculate and most beloved daughter of the Blessed Trinity, and yet you emptied your bitter chalice of suffering. No one, with the exception of your Divine Son, ever suffered as you have suffered. But I, an unworthy and vile sinner, who have so often merited hell, try to escape the sufferings which would help me to expiate my offences. I seek my ease in all things, I care for nothing but amusements and pleasures, and thus by my own self-indulgence I create new sources of fresh sin. Oh, good Mother ! do not allow me to remain thus blinded. Enlighten me, so that I may not be led away by my senses, or by the artifices of the world. Strengthen my weak heart, so that fighting courageously, and triumphing over temptations, I may be so happy as to dwell in your presence, through all eternity, in the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS OUR GREAT ADVOCATE WITH HIS FATHER.

Eia ergo, Advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.

“Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us.”

Eia ergo. It is difficult to give the precise meaning of these two words, since they express at once a conclusion from an argument and a manifestation of feeling.

It is as if we were to say to Mary: “Oh kind Virgin! our cry of distress rises up to you. You cannot resist either our sorrow or the love of your Mother’s heart; you cannot forget what we are to you, or what you are to us. Are you not the Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope? Have you not been given to us to be our Mediatrix and our Mother, to console and support us in our banishment? How could you refuse to turn your merciful eyes towards us, when you see that we are oppressed with inward anguish and cruel struggles, beset from without by powerful enemies, and beaten down on all sides by the miseries which we have drawn upon ourselves by our sins; miseries, which we can scarcely bear up against, weeping and mourning in this vale of tears. Do this for us, then: *Eia ergo*: Oh Mary! do not delay to come to our aid, and if our sins provoke the just anger of God, plead our cause, for

you are our Advocate with your Divine Son.”—*Eia ergo, Advocata nostra.*

Mary is our Advocate; another strong point in our favour, a fresh argument with which to gain her heart. But before dwelling upon this thought, it will be well to go to its source, and consider how the title of Advocate belongs pre-eminently to Jesus Christ.

We shall thus possess a more thorough mastery of a doctrine which is not only most consoling in itself, but which tends to stir up within us the love of a virtue which is so necessary to us, yet in which we so frequently fail—the virtue, namely, of confidence.

The office of every advocate—as Père Lejeune teaches us, while treating of this subject—is to take in hand the cause of his client, and to defend him at the tribunal of justice. However famed advocates may be in this world, they have no other means of trying to save their clients than by speaking in their favour, and hence they often lose their causes. An advocate, in order fully to come up to our ideal, must be able to unite with triumphant eloquence the power of disarming anger and doing away with the hostility of the opposing parties. Such an advocate would be certain never to plead a cause without gaining it.

Now, one of this stamp will never be found in the tribunals of this world, but heaven is full of advocates who possess these qualities.

He who is the chief advocate at the bar of Divine Justice until that day when He will be the supreme Judge of all the living and the dead, is Jesus Christ. What skill and knowledge does He possess who is Infinite Wisdom! With what eloquence does He speak who is the Eternal Word of God! And who can tell the love He bears to his clients; He who has poured out for them the last drop of his blood! What heart is so well able to touch God and disarm his Divine Justice as the Heart of Jesus?

“If any man sins,” says St. John, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just, and He is the propitiation for our sins.”—*Si quis peccaverit, advocatum habemus Jesum Christum justum, et ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris.*—1 John, ii. 1, 2.

Let us now see how Jesus fills the office of advocate, in our behalf with his Father.

1. He Himself draws up our petitions, that is to say, the prayers which it is our duty to offer to his Father, in order that we may be sure of being heard; or else his Holy Spirit communicates them on our behalf to our Mother, the Holy Church. In the “Our Father” He has put an admirable petition into our mouths, which He knew would be all-powerful with the Heart of God. This prayer in its very opening words, reminds God of all that is most tender and touching in his relation to us, and awakens in ourselves that confidence which He most of all desires. The petitions which we make to Him are the most perfect in themselves, and follow one another in the most perfect order. First of all come those which express the honour and the love we owe to God and which speak of his interests and glory; then follow those which treat of our own interests, bound up as they are with those of God. But we must learn to say this prayer with reverence; with the humility and dependence of those who are poor; with the love and confidence of those who are children of God.

2. In order that our prayers may be acceptable to God, and sure of being heard, Jesus undertakes to present them Himself to the Eternal Father, who loves Him with an infinite love. How beautiful is the picture which St. John puts before us in the Apocalypse! “And I saw seven angels standing in the presence of God, and there were given to them seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood before the altar having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints

upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God."—Apoc. viii. 2, 3.

Now, what is this altar of gold from which arises the incense of the prayers of the saints, which an angel has first received within a golden censer? It is Jesus Christ, our Priest, our Victim, and our Altar; and it is because our altar in the sanctuary is the emblem of Jesus Christ, that the priest kisses it several times during the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. It follows, consequently, that our prayers which angels gather up, are not carried at once by their hands to the throne of God; but that this precious incense is laid on the Divine Altar which stands before God's throne, and that from the Heart of Jesus which is, as it were, the consecrated stone of that altar, it rises up to the Most High.

But Jesus is not content with offering our prayers to God.

3. He supports them, and sets forth their claim, not like the patrons of this world, whose intercession is generally accompanied by an apprehension of failure, but with an infallible assurance; because Jesus is holy, because He is our Saviour, because He is the Son of God. As a consequence, He gives infinite pleasure to God, He is infinitely beloved by God, and his blood, which is of infinite price, gives Him rights that are infinite. Advancing towards his Father, He shows the wounds in his feet and hands, and the wound of his heart, and it is within these touching and sacred wounds that He presents his clients.

It is not, however, only in heaven that He presents Himself "ever living," as St. Paul says, "to make intercession for us." *Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis.*—Heb. vii. 25. But every instant, both by day and night, He is in this attitude of intercession before his Divine Father; for upon every altar throughout the world, He is ceaselessly renewing the sacrifice

of Calvary. Oh! infinitely loving Advocate, who pleads for us with so irresistible a love; who Himself expiates the suffering due to our sins, and who pays our debts at the cost of his own blood, his wounds, and his death! Did we but know and comprehend what the Holy Mass really is, with what ardour should we press around the altars at which it is celebrated, so as to place ourselves beside the Holy Virgin Mother, beneath the cross, in the very presence of Jesus Himself! Did we but reflect that there is not a moment in which, while this world is revolving around the sun, the consecration of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is not taking place in some quarter of the globe, how many a time during the day and night should we not unite ourselves spiritually with Jesus then offering Himself up at every moment on some altar or other! This is the beautiful practice which the Vicar of Christ, Leo XIII., has suggested to us in the latest statutes of the Apostolate of the Heart of Jesus.

4. Jesus gladly accepts the little good we do, and unites it to his own merits, giving it thus a priceless worth. He unites our prayers to his prayers, our fasts to his fasting, our good works to his Divine actions, our persecutions and sufferings to his persecutions, sufferings and death. In this way our actions are clothed with a Divine splendour, enhanced and enriched by the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, and become a sweet-smelling incense before the Divine Majesty.

5. If, after having sinned, we have recourse to Him, He lessens and excuses our faults in the sight of God; He pleads the extenuating circumstances of our weakness, our dangers and our ignorance.

Thus did this beloved Advocate, from his throne of the cross, excuse even those who put Him to death, at the very moment when, with the hammers in their hands, they were driving the nails through his hands

and feet. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!"—Luke, xxiii. 34. Moreover, when God was on the point of condemning the barren fig tree, Christ said: "Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and dung it."—Luke, xvii. 8.

If Moses, stretching out his arms in the form of a cross, stayed the wrath of God and called down victory, what cannot Jesus obtain when nailed to a cross?

6. Lastly, our Divine Advocate protects and defends not only every one of the faithful who confide in Him, but also the entire Church, his beloved Spouse, against which the attacks and artifices of hell are constantly being directed.

Heresy may raise up its head; schisms may tear and desolate the Church; the impious may weave their devilish plots, or organise the most treacherous and cruel persecutions with the intention of destroying faith within the Christian soul; attacks from without may be joined to defection and apostasy from within; still Jesus, its faithful and powerful Head, will never allow the gates of hell to prevail against his Church! *Non praevalerunt*;—Mark, xvi. 18:—never shall any member of it perish, save and except such as desire to perish. "Those whom thou gavest me have I kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition."—*Pater Sancte . . . quos dedisti mihi custodiri, et nemo ex eis periit nisi filius perditionis*.—John, xvii. 12.

PRAYER.

Oh Mary, my Mother! since Jesus is an all-powerful advocate with his Father, and since by reason of the love He bears you, you are all-powerful with Him, intercede for me with your loving and beloved Son, so that in the infinite mercy of his Heart He may plead my cause with his Divine Father. And although

my sins and my ingratitude deserve that Jesus should look on me with the eyes of an angry judge, rather than as an advocate, cover my iniquity with your mantle of mercy, and let the voice of your maternal and immaculate heart make itself heard within the filial Heart of your Divine Son. Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

MARY IS OUR ADVOCATE WITH JESUS.

Eia ergo, advocata nostra.

“Most gracious Advocate.”

I.*Mary is our advocate with Jesus.*

It is as Man, as the Son of Man, that Jesus Christ is our Mediator and our Advocate; for, being God, He cannot, as God, intercede or plead with Himself.

But, if He is Mediator in his character of the Son of Man, and as such, mystically, one with us by his hypostatic union with our human nature, his mediation is all-powerful; because He is, at the same time, the Son of God and, by his Divine Nature, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. By this unity in God and by his union with us, He is the Divine link which binds God to man and man to God. He takes hold of us by his human nature, which He has in common with ourselves, and binds us to God by virtue of his Divinity, which is evermore inseparable from his Humanity through the hypostatic union of the Divine and Human Nature in his own adorable Person. And this is why the Apostle calls Jesus Christ the “one only Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ

Jesus." *Unus Mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Jesus.*—1 Tim. ii. 5. But to what has our Blessed Lord, who is the Divine Link, uniting God to man, joined Himself, so as to be able to take hold of, lift up and bind our human nature to the Divine nature? To some human stay, beyond all doubt; but to one that is virginal and immaculate, which is as much as to say to the ever blessed and most glorious Virgin Mary. So that the humanity is linked to Mary, Mary to Jesus, and Jesus to God. Hence, the Blessed Virgin is called our Mediatrix with her Divine Son, and Holy Church gives her the title of "Advocate" in the *Salve Regina*. She alone, amongst all the Saints—she who is the Queen of Saints—can strictly deserve to be called our Advocate; and if in the Liturgy we occasionally find the term in connexion with some saint, who is spoken of as an Advocate with God, the Church reserves this honour and privilege in its fullest acceptation to the Blessed Virgin. And in very truth, if the saints are powerful intercessors for us with God, if they obtain graces for us, and protect us against our enemies, it is the Blessed Virgin, alone, because of the great and singular influence which her Divine maternity gives her, who appears in a certain sense to plead as our Advocate with Divine mercy. In fact, she does this so well, that she never loses a single cause.

On this account, we ought to have boundless confidence in her, and believe it, moreover, to be of the greatest importance to our salvation, that we should strive always to stand well with her and enjoy her favour.

It remains for us now to consider how our Advocate manages always to succeed in her pleadings.

An advocate is sure to gain his cause, when, on the one hand he has at his command the means of persuading and influencing his judge; while, on the other, he is so devoted to his client that he is ready to sacrifice

everything to save him. These two advantages are possessed by our Advocate, the Blessed Virgin, in the highest degree possible, always excepting her Divine Son.

II.

The power of our Advocate.

Mary is powerful, because she has at her command every means of persuasion. In order to plead well, the advocate must be thoroughly acquainted with his case; he must be able to make the most of his advantages and reduce to nothing all the difficulties put forward by the opposing party. Now, Mary possesses in an eminent degree all these elements of success. Much more clearly than any of the saints, she sees in God all the causes of all her clients; but the wisdom, the eloquence, the power of our heavenly Advocate are manifested chiefly in the way in which she discovers what are the claims (real ones of course,) which tell in favour of her client, and her skill in urging them triumphantly. In fact (and be not astonished by the strangeness and apparent contradiction of this reasoning), she is so skilful, that the very things for which we should stand condemned, become through her a means of obtaining a favourable verdict.

In addition to this, she claims rights which are not ours at all; and by the aid of these two means which would cause advocates in this world to lose their causes, she never pleads without gaining hers.

1^o. She brings up in our defence precisely those points which would naturally ensure our condemnation,

namely, our misery and our unworthiness, as Père Lejeune points out.

What advocate would dare, in one of our courts of justice, to base his suit upon the desperate state of his client's cause ?

This, nevertheless, is the way in which the Queen of Advocates proceeds. Indeed, she goes further than this, and does what in one of our law suits would inevitably insure the condemnation of the accused person. She insists on her client acknowledging himself the utter badness of his cause. That done, she begins her defence of him, and is certain to succeed.

What, then, is the secret of her success ?

It is this ; whereas, in our courts of law, advocates can only plead for justice, Mary triumphs over all the rights of justice, by appealing, in her character of Mother of Mercy, from the tribunal of justice to the throne of Divine Mercy. She knows our guilt too well to appeal for justice on our behalf ; she is aware that it would be wasting time to do this, and would, in addition, be insulting God. But at the tribunal of mercy there must, of necessity, be misery to deal with ; otherwise there would be no motive for pronouncing sentence, and the cause would not come within the jurisdiction of that tribunal. The devil, who is the opposing party, *adversarius vester diabolus*,—1 Pet. v. 8., always seeks to drag the sinner before the tribunal of justice only, where he must certainly meet with condemnation. His great object is to drive the sinner to despair, so as to make him say with Cain : “ My iniquity is greater than may deserve pardon.”—Gen. iv. 13. But what does the Blessed Virgin do, on the contrary, when the sinner raises his eyes to her and implores her assistance ? She takes him, so to speak, by the hand, as any loving mother would take an erring son of hers by the hand, and says to him : “ Beware, poor sinner, of having your cause tried at the tribunal of

justice, for there you would be inevitably condemned. Come with me to the tribunal of mercy. There, your very offences and sins, which would be your condemnation before the tribunal of justice, will become, if you but humbly avow them and if you join me in asking pardon, an assured right to the mercy of God."

This was what the publican, in the Gospel narrative, understood so well. While the proud Pharisee, feeling sure of his claim, presented himself before the justice of God, and was, for this reason, condemned, the publican, seeing himself already condemned in advance at the tribunal of justice, appealed from it to the court of God's mercy. There he made the very sinfulness for which he was justly condemned, a title of acquittal, and humbly acknowledging the wickedness of his life, he struck his breast, saying: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." *Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori.*—Luke, xviii. 13.

He returned home absolved and justified.

Truly, humility in a sinner, and mercy in God, are things beautiful to contemplate!

2°. The second means which our heavenly Advocate employs, after she has made her client both feel and own his guilt, and after she has led him to the tribunal of mercy, is to transfer rights and claims to her client, which, in reality, do not belong to him, but over which she is allowed to have full control, and she does this under the very eyes of the judge.

Now, as these rights are in accordance with strict justice, and absolutely incontestable; and as they contain in themselves the complete vindication of the law, inasmuch as they furnish an infinite satisfaction, Mary at once gains a verdict in favour of her client. Thus she is an advocate in the strictest sense of the term: she follows out all the forms of law, and so skilful is she in pleading that the judgment pronounced has often to be reversed. What then are these mysterious claims

by means of which our all-powerful Advocate triumphs? They are nothing more nor less than the rights of Jesus Christ, of which she has been made the guardian, by Himself in person, and which she applies as she pleases; they are the infinite merits of Jesus, his infinite love for God, his prayers, his labours, his weariness, his shame, his sufferings and his death.

Figure to yourself, then, Mary as the treasurer and dispenser of these infinite merits, which never diminish however much they are drawn upon; remember that she is the Mother of Mercy, and then judge what use she will make of these inexhaustible funds, and with what royal magnificence and profuse liberality, she will apply these merits to her poor children here on earth.

Whilst the saints are interceding with God for some gift out of the Divine treasury, Mary can draw what she wills out of that infinite treasury, paying at once all the debts of the unhappy sinner who implores her kindness, and the Divine Justice itself sets him at liberty forthwith.

When we reflect how pure, how amiable, how lovable, Mary is in the eyes of God; when we think of her tenderness to Jesus, the Son of God and her own son, can we any longer imagine that she will ever meet with a refusal on the part of God?

Never yet has she met with such a refusal, nor will she ever meet with it. No sooner does she present herself before God than success is assured.

When she sees a sinner having recourse to her, she pleads thus for him to her Son: "My God, and my Son, behold this poor sinner, who for so many years has been plunged into an abyss of iniquity. I know that he has merited hell a thousand times, but he owns his guilt, and fearing to go near you, whom he has so often offended, he has invoked me as the Mother of Mercy. It is You, my Son, who are Mercy itself; pardon this

sinner for your Mother's sake. I will pay you even more than he owes to your justice; I offer you on his behalf, your Wounds, your Blood, your Sacred Heart." And then Jesus is disarmed, and pardons for the sake of his beloved Mother.

In this way we can explain the conversion of so many sinners, whose salvation appeared hopeless. Happy, a thousand times happy, is that sinner, be he ever so guilty, who is willing to humble himself, to pray to Mary, and to follow her to the tribunal of mercy.

How blessed also is the name of Mary in purgatory, where, like a good advocate, she unceasingly makes all feel her power and her love, either by consoling the souls that are suffering there, or by shortening the duration of their pains! "Oh Blessed Virgin," exclaims St. Bernardine of Siena, "you exercise a great dominion in the kingdom of purgatory!" *O Beata Virgo, in regno purgatorii dominium habes. Serm. iii. de Nom. Mariæ.* And, according to the same saint, this is how that dominion is exercised. "I visit them," Mary says, "and I relieve those who have been devoted to me, and who are thus my children, comforting them in their needs and in their sufferings."

And listen to Denis the Carthusian, who represents the Blessed Virgin as describing her power in purgatory. "By the mere mention of my name, the souls in purgatory feel a joy similar to the joy which the sick man feels as he lies on his bed of suffering, when some one consoles him by comforting words." *Lib. iii. de Laud. Virg.*

But Mary goes further still. She shortens the duration of those sufferings.

St. Bernardine of Siena says that the Blessed Virgin has power to deliver from purgatory, especially those who have been her servants, by her prayers, and by her application of the merits of Jesus. *Ab his tormentis*

liberat Beata Virgo, maxime devotos suos. Serm. iii. de Nom. Mariæ.

According to Gerson, she has had this privilege since the day of her Assumption; and Novarin, who bases his opinion on good authority, says, that on that day, just as she was about to be raised to heaven, she pleaded so effectually with her Divine Son, that she took with her to Paradise all the souls then in purgatory. *Virg. Umb. c. 15. Exc. 86.*

III.

The Kindness of our Advocate.

We may always count upon the kindness of the Blessed Virgin, because she is ever ready to use all her endeavours to save her clients. We need not insist upon this thought. We ought not to give pain to the loving and compassionate heart of the most tender of mothers, by thinking it necessary to bring proofs of the above proposition. Whoever could call into doubt the mercy of the Blessed Virgin, would, in so far, resemble the Protestants who reject Mary; or else would show that she is to him, as it were, a stranger and one unknown, and that he is ignorant of the fact that she is a mother, and the Mother of Mercy, the Refuge of Sinners, and the hope of such as despair; that she became the Mother of Jesus only in order to save the lost. He would do her the wrong of believing that she is unlike her Son, who had so great pity for sinners as to pour out on their behalf the last drop of his Sacred Blood. But enough of this. We do not give proof that the sun gives light; all the world sees that. So too, we do not bring arguments to prove that

the Blessed Virgin is full of kindness and goodness. The whole world knows that she is; has always said so, and always will say so; because the goodness of Mary shines out as the sun upon the earth.

It will be more to the purpose to quote a touching example of Mary's maternal kindness.

The incident took place upon the 6th April, 1854, in a small chapel near Tourcoing, which a land-owner, who was an excellent Catholic and a zealous promoter of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, had erected in honour of our Lady of La Salette.

A young girl had suffered for some considerable time from a tedious and painful malady, in the course of which she had received the last Sacraments. It was a great grief to her that, for nearly a year, she had been unable to be present at Holy Mass; for she could not move without extreme pain, and for a long time past had become so weak that it was only with great difficulty that she could be lifted from one bed to another.

Although when she made the attempt she was in a state of great suffering, she resolved to try and hear Mass again in the nearest church to her home. We will let her tell her story in her own simple words: for it was her wish to leave to her family the account of her cure, so that this fresh instance of the goodness of the Blessed Virgin might not be lost to memory.

"I had always felt great confidence in the Blessed Virgin, and I hoped that this good Mother of mine would cure me. This confidence increased much when I heard that within a mile of my home, a chapel had been built in honour of our Lady of La Salette. I felt an ardent desire to go there and pray to Mary, but in such a state as I was, how could I travel even the distance of a mile? The Blessed Virgin enabled me to realise my desire, while I was making a last effort to go to Mass in our parish church of St. Christopher. I started very early in the morning so as to arrive in time,

leaning as well as I could on my umbrella. When my father, from some way off, perceived that I was tottering at every step, he said to the servant: 'She will never get there in time; Mass will be over.' He had already ordered the carriage to be brought to convey me home, but changing his mind all of a sudden, he sent the servant to meet me and help me to go wherever I wished.

"It had taken me already an hour and a half to get over that short distance.

"When the servant came up to me, I asked him if he knew the way to the chapel of our Lady of La Salette. Finding that he did, I said I should like him to take me there. I was overcome with fatigue, but the hope of visiting the Blessed Virgin gave me fresh strength, and filled me with joy.

"When I reached the holy shrine, I was utterly exhausted; it was only something under a mile from our house, and yet I had been three hours getting there, and three times I had been compelled to stop and rest myself. At last I was able to prostrate myself on the threshold of the little chapel while the servant went in search of the keys.

"A girl in herearly teens came to open the door, and went in, after my servant and myself had entered. I knelt as well as I could, leaning on the back of a chair. Whilst I was praying, my confidence kept increasing, and I felt that it was inspired by my loving Mother, Mary. I fixed my eyes on her picture, and I thought I saw a smile upon her sweet face, so that my confidence became stronger than ever.

"Soon after, it seemed to me that I saw her smile a second time; I was praying earnestly, and the servant, perceiving a change come over my countenance, thought that I was going to faint. The Blessed Virgin then seemed to smile on me for a third time, seeing my trust in her, and suddenly I felt myself being raised from the

ground ; I was standing up without any effort, my arms stretched themselves out, my rosary fell from my hands, and I cried aloud : ‘ Our Lady of La Salette, you have cured me.’ And, then, although just before I had scarcely been able to make myself heard, even by the most attentive listener when I spoke, I began to sing hymns in praise of that most beloved and loving Mother. I had regained in a moment, not only the power of speech, but also complete strength and vigour. At the time I felt myself being lifted up, my servant was overcome with emotion, and the poor girl uttered a cry of surprise. Leaving the chapel, I set off running at full speed. The first person whom I met was the good old man who had built the chapel : I threw myself into his arms. The Blessed Virgin wished him to be the first witness of the cure worked in the little chapel he had erected in her honour.”

But a second favour was bestowed on this person by the Blessed Virgin who cured her ; it was the gift of a religious vocation. This dear child of Mary consecrated herself to God after her recovery, and entered a convent of the “ Dames de la Sainte-Union,” where she is still living.

PRAYER.

Oh, glorious Virgin and ever Blessed Mother of God ! you are the most loving of all mothers. Like Jesus, you wish that all men may be saved, and if your maternal hand does not open the gate of heaven to even the greatest sinners, it is because they obstinately turn away from you. Holy Church, who knows you well, proclaims that you were assumed into heaven to fill the office of advocate there. She tells us that it is in order that you may confidently intercede for us with the Divine clemency, that God has separated you from sinners, and placed you above his angels and above his saints. As

it is so, be then my advocate, oh Mother of Mercy! From heaven where you can do all things, you see me prostrate at your feet—an unworthy and miserable sinner in this valley of tears. Plead my cause with your Divine Son and save me.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

THE MERCIFUL GLANCE OF MARY.

Illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.

“Turn thy merciful eyes towards us.”

In these words we ask the Blessed Virgin for a favour which at first sight may seem one of small importance : that she will turn her eyes towards us ; nevertheless, if we obtain this, our salvation is assured.

One look of Mary’s expresses her benevolence in our regard ; it implies that she feels an affection for us, and that, consequently, she desires to save us. Now, Mary’s desires are always accomplished in heaven.

The Latin text gives us two words to characterize the glance of Mary, *illos tuos*, which it is impossible to translate into our language, except by a paraphrase. It is as though we were to say to the Blessed Virgin : “Turn towards us those eyes of yours, those eyes which possess a charm belonging only to yourself, and to which no other creature can bear a true resemblance ; those eyes in which is reflected, as in a transcendent mirror, the most pure, the most loving, the most lovable soul which God ever has created or ever will create, after that of Jesus.” And it is not an ordinary glance which we ask from you, but one of those glances so well known to all, *illos* ; those looks which resemble those of Jesus in their power to triumph over even the most rebellious hearts ; which in a moment can soothe and comfort souls suffering from the heaviest afflictions ;

which shed abroad happiness in the hearts of all your children, and make you the "Cause of our Joy," *Causa nostræ lætitiæ*. A child will smile with happiness when it meets the loving glance of its mother; but what is the affectionate look of any and every earthly mother as compared with that of our beloved and witching Mother in Heaven? Oh, loving and glorious Mother! the delight of my heart, cast upon me, while I am speaking to thee, one look, though it be but for a moment.

By an admirable marvel of his power, God has made the eyes of man the index of the soul. It is in the eye that we see the whole soul; the fire of genius, the intelligence of the mind, the strength of courage, compassion for sorrow, goodness, and tenderness; it is in the eye, too, we see expressed the shame and punishment of guilt—corruption, hypocrisy, anger, hatred, and other passions which the soul would fain conceal from observation were it possible to do so. The eyes are ever the mirror of the soul in spite of ourselves; a mirror often so faithful and so truthful, that a guilty man will at once lower his eyelids, and not dare to look people in the face, for fear of betraying himself. Now, if the look is the mirror of the soul, has not the Church reason to sigh for the glance which unfolds to us the most fair soul of Mary, Maiden and Mother? Was not the Holy Spirit Himself ravished by the pure glances of the Immaculate Virgin, when, in the Book of Canticles, He speaks of the eyes of Mary as of the eyes of a Dove, in order to express their exceeding beauty and incomparable lovingness? *Oculi tui columbarum*—Cant. i. 15. And in the same book, He adds: "You have wounded my heart, my Sister, my Spouse, with one of your looks."—Cant. iv. 9. How could it be otherwise? How could those most pure eyes fail to entrance all heaven, in which, as in the clearest crystal, the rays of the Divinity are reflected; those

eyes which so long contemplated the Word Incarnate, and which penetrated even the most hidden depths of the Sacred Heart? Those eyes thrice blessed, which ever spoke of Jesus, the Father of Mercies; those eyes that were the true "Mirror of Justice," *speculum iustitiæ*, since Jesus, the Sun of Justice, was ever reflected in them. The eyes of Jesus and Mary reflected one the other; they met together as in a living mirror, and seemed to become one and lose their individuality in a mutual and unspeakable love.

But God has not only made the eyes of man a mirror of his soul; He has placed within them two mysterious fountains which may be our comfort in our own sorrows, but still more a source of sympathy in the sufferings of others. Such tears, the precious pearls of charity, were not wanting to the eyes of Mary, who was to be the Mother of Mercy. How often, at the remembrance of the words of the Prophet: "They have pierced my hands and my feet,"—Ps. xxi. 17, did she not weep as she contemplated the hands of the infant Jesus!

How often must she have wept when she called to mind what Christ had said Himself by the mouth of the prophet Isaias: "I have not turned away my face from them that plucked my cheeks and spat upon me!"—Is. l. 6.

But above all, what tears must she have shed when standing at the foot of the cross, during the three hours' agony of Jesus, when she received his lifeless and Sacred Body upon her knees, and when she returned to Jerusalem, after her beloved Son had been laid in the sepulchre!

Unhappy they who see around them none save tearless eyes, especially if the eyes that shed no tears be the eyes of a mother, for they are in the midst of those who have no heart and no mercy.

This misery will not be the lot of those who dwell

in the company of the sweet and loving Queen of Heaven.

“Oh! all ye who pass by,” she said on Calvary, “look and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.”—Lament. i. 12. “My face is swollen with weeping, and my eyelids are dim.”—Job, xvi. 17. Thus was she destined to weep, who was to be ever the Mother of Mercy and the consolation of all the afflicted.

Now, therefore, we understand why all, both just and sinners, should say to Mary in union with our Holy Mother the Church: “Turn thine eyes of mercy towards us.”

To those who are in the grace and friendship of God, how desirable always, how encouraging is the propitious glance of Mary! From the very fact of their being in a state of grace, they are the adopted children of God, brothers, by election, of Jesus Christ, and mystical members of Jesus; they live, by grace, the life which Jesus communicates to them; Jesus dwells in them and they dwell in Jesus. “If any one eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, he abideth in Me and I in him.”—John, vi. 57. Let us take note of the beautiful conclusion which flows from this. If Jesus is within us, Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, cannot look on us without seeing, with unspeakable love, Jesus within our soul; therefore, she must look upon us with the same loving and maternal eyes with which she looks upon Jesus Himself.

But it is the sinner, above all, who stands in special need of a glance from Mary; nor will the Mother of Mercy turn her back upon her sinning children. Although she is filled with joy at the sight of those in whom she beholds her Divine Son, and who are the temples of the Holy Ghost, she does not forget that upon Calvary she became the Mother of Mercy for the poor sinner.

Thus, when she beholds set up within some soul the kingdom of Satan, who brings with him the "abomination of desolation," her maternal heart is touched, and her looks of kindness and of love are changed into looks of compassion; and the greater the misery on which she looks, the more merciful and compassionate will she show herself. Never shall we be able to form a correct idea of all that Mary feels when she sees some unhappy sinner lift up his eyes to her, saying with a humble heart: "Turn, oh Mary! your eyes of mercy towards me. Upon whom will you look, oh good Mother! if it is not on the unhappy sinner who is now imploring you? Was it not to be our Mother that you became the Mother of God? What are we all but miserable sinners? And did not your Divine Son, in making you our Mother at the very moment when He was washing away our sins in the stream of his blood and dying for us, make you the Refuge of Sinners? We are guilty, it is true, but you do not cease on this account to be our Mother, nor we to be your children. In spite of our sins we love you still, and we hope in you, our Queen, our Advocate, our Hope and our Mother."

Now, if you who are thinking over this truth were in the place of Mary, could you remain unmoved while some one was exposing his wretchedness in language such as the above? Much less can the Blessed Virgin; to her Mother's heart such a thing would be impossible.

But when we say that Mary is touched by the sight of our sins and miseries, we do not mean that her tender compassion lessens in any degree her perfect happiness. A compassion which could stamp any feeling of sorrow upon the heart would be an imperfect compassion, and, as a consequence, incompatible with a state of glory. We all experience, just as Jesus during his mortal life, in his double character of pilgrim and

Saviour, a diminution of our happiness when we feel acutely for the misfortunes of others.

It is not thus with the saints who now dwell with Christ in a state of glory and perfection. The saints in heaven, and the Blessed Virgin less than any, suffer from no imperfection either in their feelings or in their virtues. The obscurity of faith has given place to the clear vision of the objects of their belief, and hope has made way for the possession of eternal bliss. Although the saints are plunged into an abyss of submission and abasement before the Divine Majesty, such feelings do not in the least diminish their happiness; they obey, but it is without pain or difficulty, for it is their sweetest delight to obey.

They, too, feel the most perfect compassion for the sorrows of others, but their compassion does not cause them to suffer. And it is thus that the great and good Queen of Heaven feels compassion; she has a more tender compassion than any earthly mother, but this takes away nothing from her unchangeable happiness, and, hence, we call her the Ever-Blessed.

She predicted of herself, in the *Magnificat*, that all generations should call her blessed: *Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*

But then, on the other hand, her happiness does not lessen her compassion for us. For, in the first place, she has herself tasted, during her mortal life, all the bitterness of suffering, and, consequently, she can appreciate our troubles. Further, she sees in God all the sorrow which comes upon us in this world, and as this knowledge is deeper and more perfect than that possessed by men here on earth or by saints in heaven, there can be no pity more tender than that of Mary, whose heart is all love, and whose eyes are, as it were, two beneficent well-springs from which there flows an inexhaustible stream of mercy.

Some years ago a Vicar of Douai had a strange

adventure, which he was fond of relating to his friends, as a striking proof of the goodness of the Mother of God towards those who have preserved some confidence in her.

One winter's night, after a day given up to the visiting of the poor and the other duties of his ministry, the vicar was busily occupied in the recital of his Office when there was a ring at the door bell. It was a messenger who came to ask him to take the last Sacraments to a poor woman who was dangerously ill. The priest would have set out at once, but, as the messenger remarked that the case was not one of immediate danger, he decided to finish his Breviary, and contented himself for the moment with taking down the address of the person who needed his services. The address given was No. 28, Rue N——. He wrote it down in his note-book, and then resumed his Office.

As soon as he had finished, his first thought was of the sick call, although his supper was waiting. This is the true order to keep, especially in the life of a priest: first God and then our neighbour; first after God our neighbour; after our neighbour, God once more. The weather was terrible, but the vicar did not mind that—indeed he may not have noticed it as he went on his way, looking by the light of the street lamps for the address which had been given. Reaching No. 18, he went down a little alley and came upon one of those buildings where a number of families of poor people and unskilled labourers are huddled together, and where it is often very difficult to find the family for which search is made.

There was no one there to show him the way, so the priest climbed up the stairs and found himself in a narrow passage that was lighted by a smoky lamp. Wishing to make inquiry he made up his mind to knock at the first door he came to. It proved an unfortunate beginning. The man who came to the door was a low churlish

fellow and a scoffer at religion. Instead of giving any answer to the priest, who asked politely if the sick woman lived there for whom he had been sent, he let fly a volley of abuse and slammed to the door.

Such things do not disconcert a priest; they are the flowers which one day will form a diadem for his brow. He knows that every affront he has received for the sake of Jesus Christ will be kept account of, and will shine some day as precious stones before the eyes of the whole world. So as if nothing had happened, the priest went further on, and up another staircase, at the top of which he met a little boy:

"Do you know, my child," he said, "where I can find a poor sick woman who has sent for me? Her name is M. G——."

"Yes, Father, she lives in the room just at the end of the passage," said the child. "She is very ill, indeed, but her name is not the one you have given."

The priest thanked the boy, and went to the door which had been pointed out. Having knocked he entered at once, feeling sure it was there he was expected.

He found himself in a low narrow room, in which everything betokened the greatest poverty and misery. At one end a woman was lying upon a straw mattress on the floor, who seemed to be at the very point of death. A man about forty years old was sitting by her side, and directly he caught sight of the priest he started up from his chair, and exclaimed, in a tone of anger and surprise: "What do you want here?"

"My friend," replied the priest, calmly, "I have been sent for to your wife, who I perceive is very ill, and I have come to give her the consolations of religion."

"Neither my wife nor I wanted anything from you. No one sent for you. Go away this instant and leave us to ourselves."

"Then I must have mistaken the door," said the priest, in a gentle voice; "but, at all events," he added, firmly, "as I see there is a person here who is dying, I must know if she wishes to speak to me before I do go away." Passing, as he said this, in front of the man, who was too much astonished to make any resistance, and bending down over the poor bed, the vicar asked the sick woman if he could render her any service.

"Oh yes, Father!" she answered, in a faint voice, "I want you indeed! For the last three days I have been begging my husband to send for a priest, but he has refused to listen to me. It is God who has brought you here. I want to make my confession."

"Do you hear this? my good friend," said the priest, turning to the husband. "It is her own wish to see me, and her last wish, and you have no right to oppose it. Be so good as to leave us alone for a few minutes."

These words were spoken in a tone of such authority and with a look of so much decision, that the man seemed spell-bound, and went out muttering something to himself.

The dying woman then made her confession, and at its close could not say how happy and grateful she was—her heart was too full.

"It is the Blessed Virgin's doing," she said to the priest, weeping and showing her rosary. "Ever since I knew I was in danger, I have said my rosary every day; asking our good Mother not to let me die without the Sacraments. You have only just come in time, for I feel I am sinking fast."

"But who was it that sent for me?" asked the priest.

"Unfortunately not myself, Father, and certainly not my husband."

“Is not your name M. G——?”

“No; that is not my name.”

The priest then took out his note-book, and saw that he had been called not to No. 18 but to No. 28; he had made a mistake in the number of the house. He was filled with wonder at this evident interposition of heaven, and said: “Yes, my poor woman, you are right; it is the Blessed Virgin who has brought me here, and in a very marvellous manner. Give thanks to her, and keep up your confidence in her, for it is evident that she means to save you.”

After a few more words of consolation, the good priest took his leave; his eyes were wet with tears as he blessed and thanked Mary. He then hastened to No. 28, where he found the sick person who had really sent for him. Having ministered to her, he returned to his house, filled with that happiness which floods the heart of a priest when he has been God’s chosen instrument in the salvation of some soul.—*Garland of Mary.*

PRAYER.

Oh, Mary, merciful Virgin! look down upon me, a poor miserable sinner. You can see, in God, the full extent of my misery. I know my iniquity, and I accuse myself before you, repenting of the great and very many sins of my life. I know that I deserve hell, and am far from meriting any consolations or favours of God. God has been for me the most loving of fathers, and I have responded to his benefits by continual ingratitude. Therefore, most Holy Virgin! I do not ask you to cast on me one of those looks which overwhelm with joy the hearts of your innocent and faithful children. Turn towards me, oh, you who never abandon those who seek your aid, one look of mercy! Ask Jesus

to pardon me and never let me offend Him again, Watch over me, keep me safe amid the assaults of temptation. Obtain for me, from the adorable Heart of your Divine Son, the grace to die rather than fall again into sin,—Amen,

Ave Maria,

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

THE DESIRE TO SEE JESUS.

Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.

“And after this our exile, show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

Such is the crowning request we make to the Blessed Virgin; it is the last grace—the grace of graces; our deliverance from exile and our entrance into glory; and this grace we ask of her who is the Gate of Heaven: *Janua Cæli.*

Up to this present, we have asked Mary to console and support us in our exile; now, it is our home we seek; it is heaven, the sight and the possession of our Father who is in heaven. This is, indeed, the blessed end to which all else must lead; our creation, our redemption, our prayers, our labours and our combats. But what a grace and charm are expressed in the words by which we ask Mary for heaven! “And show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

She is the Mother of Jesus; He is the fruit of her womb; does this not give her the right to show us Jesus? But to see Jesus is to see God; it is to be in heaven: “Show us Jesus.” Let us go no further to-day, that we may taste the full sweetness of these words. The thought, One day I shall see Jesus, could we make it sink deeply into our hearts, would of itself be sufficient to throw a charm around our banishment.

The patriarch Jacob had wept, even to his old age, for Joseph, his best-beloved son, whom he believed to be dead.

Imagine, if you can, his feelings when his sons told him that Joseph was alive—that Joseph was the ruler of Egypt! Jacob wept for very joy. “What,” he would have said, “my son, Joseph, is still alive, and my eyes shall see him before I am gathered to my fathers!”

But how much greater will be our joy on that day when we shall see Jesus; Jesus living; Jesus in his glory! What was Joseph to Jacob, compared with what Jesus is to us? Jesus is the Son of God, He is our Saviour, He is our Brother. To snatch us from the power of the devil and from hell, “He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”—*Dilexit nos et lavit nos in sanguine suo.*—Apoc. i. 5. What joy, what ecstasy for those who have loved Him, who have done everything for Him, who have died for Him, to see this lover of souls; to look upon Him bathed in the splendour of his Divine glory; to see Him with his wounds all radiant with beauty, those imperishable memorials of his love, those sources of intoxicating bliss to his elect! Then, and then only, shall we understand with inexpressible love, the love which burned within Him for us. Then, in a holy rapture, we shall comprehend what St. Paul felt when he said: “He loved me and gave Himself for me.”—*Dilexit me et tradidit seipsum pro me.*—Gal. ii. 20. Then will the Heart of Jesus appear to us with its burning flames of love, with the trophy of the cross and the crown of thorns; then we shall comprehend what it is for a God to become incarnate for his creatures; a God to be steeped in humiliations and outrages for ungrateful man; dying for those who crucified Him; asking pardon of his Father for his murderers; perpetuating his sacrifice until the end of time upon each one of our altars; nourishing his children continually upon his own flesh

and blood; persevering in this love notwithstanding countless offences; always outraged yet always pardoning. And when I see Him, He will have forgotten my sins and my ingratitude; all will have been swallowed up in the mercy of his Heart, and He will turn towards me a countenance which expresses only gentleness, a face radiant with Divine love, such as Holy Church will picture to me in the prayers which she will use in my last agony: "May Jesus appear to thee with a mild and radiant face."—*Mitis atque festivus Christi Jesu tibi aspectus appareat.*—*Ordo comm. animæ.* And when once I shall have seen Jesus, I shall see Him eternally.

My God! what an entrancing, what an indescribable moment will that be in which the soul, saved and purified, breaking away from the prison of the body, finds itself suddenly before the face of Jesus, in the arms of Jesus, upon the Heart of Jesus! If one look of Jesus, falling upon Peter who had been unfaithful to so good a Master, made the heart of that sorrow-stricken Apostle melt with grief and love, and for the remainder of his life changed his eyes into two streams of tears—who, (except perhaps the angels), could form a conception of the look which Jesus will cast, for the first time, upon that blessed soul, when at the moment of quitting this earth it appears before Him!

What will then be said by Him who spoke with such sweetness and tenderness even to the traitor Judas, saying to him: "Friend, whereto art thou come?"

Such are the thoughts which should be uppermost in our minds and absorb all others during this life which is nothing but a brief pilgrimage. What light, what strength, what consolation would they bring to our souls! But alas! men practically set more value upon this world than upon heaven; and yet what is this little grain of sand which we call the earth, with all its created goods, its impure pleasures, its childish honours, when we compare it with that first moment of Paradise, when we shall see Jesus for the first time?

Truly it is a great favour that we ask of Mary when we say to her: "Show us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Could we, possibly, offer a more eloquent prayer than one which reminds her that He is the fruit of her womb, and which blesses that Divine fruit?

Jesus is Blessed as the Son of God and as the Son of man.

He is Blessed as the Son of God, not only because, as St. Elizabeth said to Mary, He is the Divine Blessing promised from the beginning of the world, but because as God He is inundated with blessings from everlasting, and is the infinite glory of the Divinity. He is Blessed, not as are the saints who are simply God's creatures, but as the Son of God is Blessed; and it is He who sheds upon the heavenly Jerusalem his blessings and his glory.

He is Blessed as the Son of man, and as the Son of Mary; Blessed on this earth, on which the Church builds in his honour temples and altars in every country of the world; Blessed here below where millions of martyrs have shed their blood for Him; where countless hearts burn with ardent love of Him; or where unnumbered heroic souls abandon for Him both fame and fortune, that they may offer themselves as holocausts of charity, and carry to distant and heathen shores the knowledge and the love of his holy Name.

This Divine Name is praised, blessed, and loved by thousands whose lips repeat, at every moment, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." It is blessed unceasingly by all priests during the Holy Sacrifice of the altar: "Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord." It is blessed in heaven, and there we also shall bless it for all eternity.

There we shall see Jesus seated, in glory, at the right hand of his Father; we shall see Him in his deified flesh—a Man like ourselves and our Brother; we shall see Him blessed above all saints and all angels; with the eyes of the soul we shall contemplate his Divine

Soul, the masterpiece of God's glory and power; with our bodily eyes we shall behold his Sacred Body, that sun of divine brightness which dazzles all the heavens with its unspeakable splendour. "And the city had no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof."—*Et civitas non eget sole, neque luna, ut luceant in ea; nam claritas Dei illuminavit eam, et lucerna ejus est Agnus.*—Apoc. xxi. 23.

And seeing the glory and the infinite goodness of the Lamb of God, we shall bless Him with the angels and with the saints in transports of unspeakable joy. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."—*Occisus es et redemisti nos Deo, ex omni tribu et lingua et populo et natione.*—Apoc. v. 9.

Then will God throw a Divine light upon all the mysteries which have been the object of our faith and of our love. The veil of faith will be torn aside for ever.

As we contemplate the Lamb, we shall see the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation, the hypostatic union of the Divine and human natures in the adorable Person of the Word. We shall see, with rapture, how within the house of Nazareth the power of the Most High overshadowed Mary, and how Mary miraculously conceived the Holy of Holies.

And the Blessed Virgin herself, the glorious Mother of the Lamb of God, what joy shall we experience in seeing her beside her Son and resplendent with his glory!

In presence of such sacred and entrancing sights as these, what songs of benediction will resound for aye within the Heavenly Jerusalem? Must not men have lost all understanding if they can find their contentment in metals dug from the bowels of the earth; in the beauty of that body which is destined to become a

mass of corruption; in the fitful glare of worldly honour; whilst they sacrifice to these fleeting trifles the happiness and eternal glory of Paradise?

What are we about, blind and foolish that we are! Like Esau, we are selling our birthright; but our remorse will not be as his was, merely temporal; it will be an eternal and agonizing regret.

Poor blind creatures that we are! like the savages of the New World, whom we read of, we barter nuggets of gold for a few pieces of glittering and worthless glass.

Would, once more, would that we only knew what we are asking of Mary, when we beg that she will show us Jesus! But she knows, and in her mercy she will hear our request; and her heart rejoices when we repeat, after her cousin, St. Elizabeth, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" When, for the first time, she heard these words, a thrill of gratitude and love passed through her; the Holy Spirit took possession of her soul, and she cried: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." *Magnificat anima mea Dominum, et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.*—Luke, i. 46, 47. Therefore, we may be sure that we cannot please Mary better than by reminding her that *Jesus is the blessed fruit of her womb*. Does she not then answer back, "He who is mighty hath done great things to me: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est. Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*—Luke, i. 48-49.

The Name alone of Jesus when we pronounce it touches the heart of Mary in an indescribable manner, and, at the same time, reminds her of her Divine maternity, the source of all her greatness. What prayer can so flood her heart with bliss, as that in which we express the desire to see Jesus her Son? Who can describe the joy which she experiences, and the gratitude which overflows in her mother's heart, when

she hears us blessing Jesus, the fruit of her womb. *Benedictum Fructum ventris tui.* To understand this we should have to comprehend the full extent, the breadth and the depth of the love with which her heart burns towards her Divine Son.

We bless Jesus: *Benedictum Fructum*; that He should be called Blessed is the greatest and most ardent desire of the heart of Mary, and surely, Jesus deserves to be for ever blessed, for having brought us a blessing in place of the curse incurred by our first father.

Blessed, also, above all women, is she who gave Him birth; for, although Jesus is for us the source of all blessings, Mary is his Mother, and it is by her hands that He loves to bestow his favours. How happy is Mary when she is able to substitute the blessing of grace for the curse of sin in some heart that has strayed away; when she can by grace bring forth within it the "Blessed Fruit of her womb;" and when she can transform an enemy, a blasphemer of her Son, into a faithful servant, nay even into a vessel of election, and an apostle, who will one day spread far and wide the knowledge and love of Jesus, and cause Him to be blessed by thousands and thousands of tongues.

A child was once consecrated to Mary at his birth by his pious mother; and this consecration was renewed at the time of his First Communion; when the good mother herself composed a beautiful act of consecration to the Queen of Heaven, which the youth was to make use of whenever he went to Communion. In this prayer she asked that her son might have a vocation to the priesthood, and become a missionary in some Religious Order. She had, as far as lay in her power, prepared him for this sublime career, by implanting in his soul the holiest religious sentiments, and she entertained the confident hope that her prayer would be heard.

Alas ! this hope was soon destroyed. When he grew up, this young man, the object of so holy a love, unfortunately fell into the hands of bad companions, who soon robbed him of his innocence, and plunged him into an abyss of wickedness. Sinking deeper and ever deeper into sin, he ended by hating the very name of religion. Even the sight alone of a priest was enough to irritate him beyond measure, and he would make use of the most blasphemous language without any feeling of remorse. Had it been possible for him to do so, he would have given up believing altogether, but the teaching of his childhood had made too deep an impression on him, and he stopped short of positive unbelief. And once, when he lay down to rest after a day spent in sin, a horror at his state stole over him with the darkness of night, and his conscience unceasingly troubled and terrified him, and seemed to threaten him, saying: "If you were to die now, you would wake up in hell." However, after a long while he fell asleep, without making any act of sorrow for sin committed.

This remorse and fear were doubtless an effect of the mercy and kindness of Mary. When quite young, the unhappy boy had read the "Glories of Mary," and the examples related in that book had left a profound impression on his mind, and had made him resolve that, happen what might, he would never fail to say three Hail Marys before going to sleep. "Even though I be unfortunate enough to lead a bad life," he said to himself, "I will be all the more faithful to this practice in proportion as I may sink the lower!" And, in fact, in the midst of his sinful career, he was always faithful to this resolution: sometimes, too, he even recited the act of consecration which his mother had composed for him, and he had a secret conviction, that by continuing to invoke Mary, it would be impossible to go on always living a bad life. It seems from this, that his mind

was firmly made up on two points: to continue in his sins, because he loved them, and never to give up his devotion to Mary, because he dreaded hell.

After spending his holidays in sin, and becoming still more depraved by reading bad books, the youth returned to college more than ever confirmed in evil, but still more than ever tormented with the bitter pangs of remorse; yet he resisted grace, and refused to give up the struggle. One day, however, he went to confession. What took place in his soul at that moment he could never tell; but suddenly he felt himself, as it were, thrown to the ground, like St. Paul; a bandage seemed to be removed from his eyes: never before had he seen his sins in all their terrible reality. The mercy of God had conquered his rebellious heart. The poor youth began to weep, and exclaimed, while shedding an abundance of tears, "Enough! I have committed my last sin." As the words escaped him, he felt within himself so deep and certain a conviction of his conversion, that he was utterly astonished and quite unable to account for it. Only a few hours previous he had hated priests, and felt angry at the mere sight of a cassock; and now, on leaving the Church a quarter of an hour after his confession, his choice was made, and he said: "Yes; I feel it; the blow has struck home. I shall be a priest, and perhaps a missionary."

With the exception of his mother, no one, not even his confessor, had any faith in the reality of his conversion, much less in his perseverance; but led on by grace he said to himself, "I will die rather than sin again. I will invoke Mary so earnestly that to fall back into vice will be impossible."

And, indeed, he did invoke her earnestly. Every day, the young man might be seen reciting his rosary, and offering earnest petitions to the Queen of Heaven who had saved him. His temptations returned, it is true; but now they only inspired him with disgust,

and he who before had not courage enough to make the least struggle, felt now so strongly borne up by grace that it would have needed a positive effort of his will to consent to evil.

The act of consecration which he had never wholly omitted ; the three Hail Marys which he had faithfully repeated, even in his most sinful days ; the constant presentment that by Mary he should be rescued ; the impossibility of attributing his conversion to anything save the mercy of Mary ; the certain conviction that he had received all this grace through her ; his deep gratitude to the Mother of Mercy ; and, lastly, the gift of perseverance, and the happiness of not relapsing again into mortal sin ; all prove that this conversion was the work of the Blessed Virgin, who cannot act against her nature, which is to love, to pity, and to obtain pardon.

Our kind, heavenly Mother has crowned her work by guiding this favoured son of hers into a Religious Congregation, which is especially consecrated to her. There he is now, blessing, and will ever continue to bless, his loving Patroness.*

PRAYER.

O Mary, Mother of God, and ever glorious Virgin ! I prostrate myself at your feet to implore that grace which is the most precious of all to us, poor banished children of Eve. After this our exile, show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb. You see my need of your assistance, constantly assaulted as I am by enemies that are also your enemies. Protect me, in all these dangers, as my most tender mother. Above all, when the solemn and fearful moment approaches, in which I must engage in that decisive

* Related by the person to whom it happened.

combat of my last agony, be then, I ask this through the Sacred Heart of Jesus, present at my death-bed, that so my final perseverance may become assured. Receive my last breath; show me Jesus the Blessed Fruit of your womb, so that, in union with his Mother and my Mother, I may glorify the Divine mercy through endless ages. Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED THAT MARY MAY SHOW US JESUS.

Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui nobis post hoc exilium ostende.

“And after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

I.

To see Jesus we must live as exiles here below in this world.

We ask Mary to show us Jesus; but only after we have passed through the trial and the punishment of our exile, *post hoc exilium*; we must, therefore, live in this world as exiles. Unhappy they who take this earth to be their native country, instead of looking upon it as a place of banishment. For of such we read that their names shall be written in the earth: They that depart from Thee shall be written in the earth; *recedentes à te in terra scribentur*.—Jerem. xvii. 13. Who, on the contrary, are they whom Jesus has bidden to rejoice? They are those who not only are sojourners in this land of banishment, but who have willingly submitted to its sorrows in union with Jesus Christ. In fact, those to whom Christ was speaking when He bade them thus rejoice were his Apostles, and these are the words in which He describes the reason of their joy and their title to heaven. “Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the

Son of man's sake. Be glad in that day and rejoice, for behold your reward is great in heaven."—Luke, vi. 22, 23. Joy, the true joy promised by our Saviour, must go hand-in-hand with the sorrow and weeping caused by the world. "Amen, amen," Jesus said to his Apostles just before leaving them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep; but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."—John, xvi. 20.

The joy of this world is not, therefore, compatible with the joy that is in Christ, and we shall find this alternative to be inevitable: either the joy of this world and hell to follow, or else what the world calls sorrow, and afterwards eternal joy in heaven.

He who desires to see Jesus after death, must first renounce himself, and despise that which is loved and sought for by the world which Jesus Christ has declared to be accursed. To do this he will have to struggle against his evil and worldly inclinations; he will have to carry his cross with Jesus. "He who will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me," Christ has said.

Instead of attaching himself to the world, and to his place of banishment, he must constantly sigh with the Psalmist after God and after his heavenly country: "Oh God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, O how many ways!"—Ps. l. 1, 2. And the following must be his estimate of the present world: "In a desert land, and where there is no way, and no water; so in the sanctuary have I come before Thee, to see thy power and thy glory."—Ps. lx. 3.

This world is a desert. Yes; for those who have eyes and see aright, the earth can be nothing but a desert; to those who realise that they are made for God: for every place must be a desert, where God is not seen,

and we can see God only in our true home which is heaven. The spiritual man understands this language ; the " animal man " (to use the expression of St. Paul), that is, the man who lives the life of the senses, " perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand."—1 Cor. ii. 14. The earth is *without a well-trodden road : in terra invia*. It has, of course, a broad highway, frequented by a vast multitude ; but this leads only to the eternal precipice. To reach God we must climb up bye-ways, which are little trodden, and are sown with thorns and brambles.

Then, this earth is *without water : et inaquosa*. There are streams of brackish water in plenty ; but impure water poisons the soul, without quenching its thirst. There are, however, here and there, some pure streams ; delicious springs of Divine consolation. But alas ! how few discover these !

Such, then, is the world ; but its troubles are nothing if we have the happiness of seeing Jesus for all eternity. " For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure, exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory," says St. Paul. *Momentaneum et leve tribulationis immensum supra modum gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis*. 2 Cor. iv. 17. It will not, however be sufficient to become interiorly convinced that this world is a place of exile ; we must act up to our conviction. Let us not deceive ourselves. We shall never arrive at the desired end, if, instead of directing our steps thither, we take a path which leads in the opposite direction. It will be in vain for you to flatter yourself that because the Blessed Virgin is good and kind, she will save you in spite of yourself and show Jesus to you, if you obstinately tread the path that separates you from her and from her Divine Son. Mary is, without doubt, the Mother of Mercy. She will often work miracles of conversion, even at the

hour of death, for those who have kept up some practice of devotion in her honour ; but most miserable and most foolish will he be, who reckons upon some such marvel in a matter which concerns the whole of his eternity. We may risk our fortune, we may risk our temporal happiness, for in such cases we can lose nothing but things that we must perforce lose when we come to die. But to risk the loss of heaven, that infinite and endless good ; to risk falling into the flames of hell, is the height of madness ; for it is to incur the danger of the one great misery which it is of infinite importance to escape from. Now, to remain one hour, or even less, in a state of mortal sin, is to risk our eternity ; for death may overtake us while we are in that condition. "The Son of Man will come at an hour when you least expect Him." Therefore, we must be always ready. Jesus Christ has told us so. *Estote parati.* "Be ye, therefore, ever ready."

II.

To see Jesus in heaven we must be the friends of Jesus here below.

Do you desire to see Jesus in the next life ? Do you want Mary to show Him to you at the end of your banishment ?

Conciliate Jesus ; gain the favour of his Blessed Mother ; and they will both assist you at the hour of death.

Gain first of all the friendship of Jesus, the Son of Mary. He desires, even more than you desire it yourself, to show Himself to you for all eternity. What He did for you during the sufferings of his bitter passion, you would never do for yourself ; but He expects that

you will look upon Him as your Sovereign, during the quickly passing years of your life. Can a God, can a Saviour ask less? Give yourself to Him and He will give Himself to you. But how can you give yourself to Him? How can you belong to Him? By living in his grace and in his love; by fighting against everything which could separate you from his friendship; by seeking his company; and by openly professing your friendship for Him, in defence of his honour.

First, by living in his friendship. In order to see Jesus in heaven, we must die in the friendship of Jesus; but how can we hope to do this if we live alienated from the Sacred Heart, and think little of wounding It by mortal sin?

Far be it from us to say that the sinner who falls through weakness and repents forthwith of his offence—who falls anew only to rise once more—will not be in death the friend of Jesus; for Jesus is the Father of all mercy, and knows too well the fathomless depth of sinfulness in our poor hearts, not to have pity upon us.

But to offend Him constantly, to live continually estranged from Him without feeling any remorse, and then to expect that after making a confession just before our death, we shall see Jesus and enjoy his love eternally, is not this the most mean and base presumption possible? We know that a sinner of this stamp is obliged, even at the hour of death, to hope for pardon, and, moreover, that it is in his power to obtain it, if he seeks God's mercy, and corresponds with grace; but it is surely the height of folly and baseness to stake everything upon the last moment, when it is a question of a matter which should make us tremble, the matter of our salvation!

“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” writes the Apostle.—*Cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operamini.*—Phil. ii. 12. After having put off our repentance till the hour of death, can we be sure at that

supreme moment of obtaining the requisite dispositions? Shall we then have the grace and the courage to change all at once, to love that which we have hated all through life, and to hate that which we have always loved?

These are serious thoughts, and well deserve to be carefully weighed by those who think much of earth and little of heaven.

Secondly, to belong to Jesus, it is necessary to have his spirit and mind; to love what He loved, to hate what He hated, to love the cross and hate the world.

Listen to St. Paul when he tells us the distinguishing characteristics of the disciples of Christ: "And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences."—*Qui autem sunt Christi, carnem suam crucifixerunt cum vitiis et concupiscentiis suis.*—Gal. v. 20.

Now to crucify the flesh is to subdue the corruption of our nature; it is to combat bravely all that is of the world worldly; every inordinate desire of the goods of this earth; all concupiscence of the flesh and all the pride of life. But too often we entertain within us feelings of independence and ambition; we dream only of acquiring wealth, and above all, in place of crucifying the flesh, we indulge and flatter it, living for pleasure, seeking and studying our own ease. What, then, is the consequence of this softness towards ourselves? It is that since we do not fight against self, we have not the courage to resist the attraction of forbidden pleasures; we become the sport of our passions and we fall into innumerable sins, in the midst of which we pass our lives until the bitter end.

Thirdly, we must love to be with Jesus; for this is the sign of a true friendship. It is before the altar where Jesus is present, that we must form and strengthen the ties of a mutual love. It is for this that Jesus invites us to come to Him: "Come unto Me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."—

Matt. xi. 28. If you are insensible and indifferent to this prodigious love of your God; if Jesus imprisoned within the tabernacle is for you as if He was not there, could He not say to you when you appear before Him: "I never knew you."—*Numquam novi vos.*—Matt. vii. 23. Does he deserve to enjoy Jesus in heaven, who has shunned his presence in our churches, and who has regarded it a wearisome duty to converse with Him who has so loved us as even to die crucified for us? Does he deserve to be with Jesus in heaven, who though invited by his Divine Redeemer so often to receive Him in Holy Communion, has not cared to be admitted to that Sacred Banquet? Is not this the way to drive away those powerful graces by which we could so easily save ourselves?

Fourthly. It is necessary to make open profession that we belong to Jesus, and to defend his Holy Church, which is his Spouse. Do they deserve to enjoy for all eternity the Beatific Vision of Jesus, who have been ashamed to show that they love and adore Him on earth; who have chosen the esteem of those who do not love Him, or who persecute Him; who, to obtain some coveted office, some temporal advantage, have chosen to range themselves on the side of his enemies; or who have, by their outward conduct, stood aloof from Him and his Church: those who from the fear of being considered devout to the Blessed Sacrament, have shrunk from genuflecting before Him, or from assuming an attitude of humility and reverence in his presence?

Is this the adoration, the love, and the deference which we owe to a God who is so great, to a God who is so good, to a God who has shed his blood for us even to the last drop?

How much is there here for careless and cowardly Christians to think over!

"Every one that shall confess Me," says Jesus Christ, "before men, I will also confess him before my Father,

who is in heaven. But he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."—Matt. x. 32-33.

What will He say to those who have not only been ashamed of Him before men, but who have bought and read books written against Him and against his Church, who curry favour with his enemies and help them to rise to power, knowing all the time that these are labouring to ruin souls? Jesus has already pronounced their sentence: "He that is not with Me is against Me."—Matt. xii. 30.

III.

We must love Mary here, if she is to show us Jesus in heaven.

In order that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, may show us her Divine Son after our exile, we must seek to gain the affection of this loving Mother here on earth. If we succeed in doing this, we are saved. How many thousand times have we been told that a true servant of Mary shall never perish, and Holy Church gives as a sign of predestination that of devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Will Mary then admit all the sinful and unworthy into heaven? No; for nothing defiled shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven. But if we are true servants of Mary, Mary will come to our aid with her all-powerful intercession; she will make her servants servants of God, and, therefore, see that they belong to Jesus. This is the constant occupation of our beloved Queen. "She is the most excellent refuge of sinners," says the pious Louis of Blois: "She is all gentleness and sweet-

ness, not for the just only, but for the sinner and for the hopeless. She disdains nobody, she refuses aid to none. God has given her all her graces in order that no one may fear to approach her. In her loving kindness, she attracts by her maternal caresses those who are evilly disposed towards God, in order that they may be devout to her, and then she influences them so powerfully, that she disposes them to return again to the grace of God, and thus to become fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not possible for any one to be lost who has been a faithful and humble servant of Mary."—*Cant. Vit. Spir. cap. 18.*

But what must we do in order to conciliate the heart of Mary at the hour of our death? When we are about to die, Mary must recognise in us, if we may so say, persons who have become endeared to her by long and loving intimacy. Thus will it be if we have loved to hold frequent communication with her; for we deem those intimate with us whom we see often; to whom we pour out our hearts in unreserved confidence; to whom we have endeavoured to render frequent service. When once such intimacy has been formed, it is not easily broken. If such be the strength of earthly friendship, the Blessed Virgin, the Faithful Virgin, will less than any other person withdraw at the moment of death from those who have served her during life. All this will enable us to understand why God's ministers recommend us so earnestly to invoke the Blessed Virgin often during the day, and to be faithful in the punctual observance of the devotional practices we have taken up in her honour. And we shall more fully understand why they advise us to wear devoutly the holy Scapular, and recite the rosary, especially in family prayer; for thus we shall form an intimate acquaintance and a deep friendship with the Queen of Heaven; nor will she sever the ties she values so dearly, when the hour of our death is at hand.

But how shall we describe the blessed confidence of those who, not content with their regular and fervent practices of devotion in Mary's honour, have bound themselves by special service to our Holy Mother, by joining the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin? Happy will be the death of him who has lived as a devout and faithful Sodalist! What peace will flood his soul as he repeats the vow of consecration which he made at the foot of the altar, and by which he promised to be for ever devoted to the love and service of Mary! The illustrious Justus Lipsius, a Professor at the University of Louvain, who never would allow anything to prevent his being present at the meetings of the Sodality, said before he died: "What gives me more peace and joy than anything else I have ever done, is the having joined the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin."

PRAYER.

Oh, Mary, show me that you are my loving Mother! Help me to feel deeply by the light and power of the Holy Spirit, that the only thing of importance during this life is to glorify God, and to prepare myself for a happy eternity. Preserve me against the illusions and fascinations of the world, which seeks ever to destroy me. Bind me closely to Jesus, who is the sole true good both of this life and of the life to come; preserve me in an unwavering fidelity to his love, so that my chief happiness may be found in visiting and receiving Him in the Sacrament of the Altar. Never permit me, even at the cost of contempt, loss of goods, or death itself, to give up the open profession of my faith and my love for Him and for his Church; and so, far from blushing to confess my Saviour and my God, may I be strong to

undertake his defence, even at the price of all I possess. Kindest Mother, obtain for me the great grace to love you tenderly, to serve you always, and thus to deserve that after my death you shall show me Jesus, the fruit of your womb.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

THE CLEMENCY OF MARY.

O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria!

“Oh clement, oh pious, oh sweet Virgin Mary!”

What a sweetness and charm is there in that final invocation of the *Salve Regina*, for a heart which can savour it, and find delight in repeating it over and over to the Queen of Heaven, as if she were visibly present! When thus often repeated with loving confidence, how it serves to soothe, console, and encourage the troubled soul of the exile in this world.

Oh clement, oh pious, oh sweet Virgin Mary! These three titles bear most fitting relation to one another, and correspond with the three most prominent dignities of Mary.

Mary is a Queen, she is a Mother, and she is an Immaculate Virgin. As Queen, she is clement; as Mother, she is full of motherly affection; as Immaculate Virgin, she overflows with sweetness. She is clement towards her subjects, loving towards her children, sweet towards all.

Her clemency is the complement of her glory and majesty in heaven, where she reigns with her Divine Son over all creatures; her motherly love is the fruit of that personal, eminent, Divine, and gratuitous favour

by which she was chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God. Her sweetness is the charm of that grace which has been bestowed upon her for the happiness of others, and which has rendered all her virtues so attractive that she entrances and ever will fascinate God and all the hearts of all creatures.

But what a new and most beautiful relation towards the Blessed Trinity do we discover, when we consider the clemency, the love, the sweetness of this ever-blessed Virgin with regard to the Three Persons of the Godhead! What an abyss of glory does this thought open before our eyes!

Words fail to express the sublime elevation of the Virgin who has contracted so marvellous an alliance, so indissoluble and intimate a union with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Mary is the Daughter of the heavenly Father; she is the Mother of the Son; and the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. The Father gives his Daughter, as an earnest of his paternal affection, sovereign power, and that most beautiful of all the attributes of power—clemency. The Son gives to his Mother, as a pledge of his filial love, the gift of tender maternal affection. The Holy Ghost gives to his virginal and immaculate Spouse, as the seal of their holy alliance, that sweetness by which all hearts in heaven above or on the earth below are won over to her maternal heart. These mysteries were revealed by the Angel to Mary, when he announced what the Three Divine Persons were about to operate in her. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee;”—this is the action of the Holy Spirit and of the Father. And the action of the Son is expressed in the words: “and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”—Luke, i. 35. Let no one ask after this why the Blessed Virgin is raised so immeasurably above the angels and the saints; why

she is more highly placed than all the Blessed united together; why, in fine, we honour her with a worship belonging specially to herself, intermediate between our worship of God and the honour we give to the Saints. The worship we pay to God is called that of *latria*; the honour common to both saints and angels is called *dulia*; and that which we offer to Mary is termed *hyperdulia*.

When the heart knows what it is to love Mary, and to be loved by her, how it delights in meditating on these her magnificent privileges!

And now, after these general considerations, let us take up successively the three titles with which our beautiful hymn of praise concludes, pausing to-day to dwell upon the first. *O clemens Virgo Maria! Oh clement Virgin Mary!*

Clemency is the most beautiful attribute of royalty. But if it is a becoming ornament to kingly power, how much more natural does it seem to be in a Queen, and of whom can it be the special prerogative more fittingly than of the Queen of Heaven?

Clemency is shown only to the guilty, and if there were no guilty, the very word *clemency* would have no existence, and the Queen of Heaven would lose one of the brightest jewels in her crown.

With what confidence should this thought inspire the poor sinner!

Clemency, on the other hand, also supposes two conditions in the person who exercises it; sovereign power, and the magnificence of a truly royal goodness. We have seen, during the course of this little work, that these two prerogatives belong pre-eminently to Mary.

She has a sovereign power. When God the Father placed the regal crown upon the head of his Son, and gave Him all power, both in heaven and on earth, the Son, in his turn, put upon the head of his Sacred Mother, the crown of Queen of heaven and of earth;

placed at her disposal his own omnipotence, to be shown in his goodness, clemency, and mercy.

With reference to his power of justice and Divine vengeance, He has given her this that she may use it against the powers of hell, the sworn enemies of mankind. Thus, whereas the angels in heaven contemplate in a rapture of admiration and love their venerated Queen radiant with the very glory of God, and the faithful mirror of his goodness; the fallen angels, feeling the weight of that foot which has crushed their head, tremble and shudder in their fearful prison, unwilling slaves to the power of Mary, who is the terror of hell. And we, poor sinners, unhappy exiles, breathe freely once more at the sight of her who undertakes our defence, of her who is all powerful with the Heart of Jesus, and we implore her clemency.

To power Mary unites goodness, which becomes clemency when it is manifested in behalf of the guilty. She has learned how to exercise this beauteous virtue of clemency in our land of exile, and she will exercise it for ever in heaven.

What did she not herself suffer here below from men? She had to be the witness of the crimes and wickedness of mankind from the first moment that she became a Mother. What opportunities, therefore, she had for the display of her clemency! Did not every blow which fell upon Jesus strike at the same time the heart of his Mother? Yet no invective, no reproach, no complaint ever escaped the lips of Mary. When she was cruelly and ignominiously driven from the inns at Bethlehem, she prayed for those merciless people, and went uncomplainingly to the stable in which the Son of God was to be born. Herod had resolved that Jesus should be put to death, and to attain his end he caused the terrible slaughter of the little innocents. The angel appeared to Joseph, and warned him to take flight. Without a word of complaint, Mary fled to Egypt with

the child, and her only revenge was to pray for her enemies, who were so cruel and so blinded. Jesus was betrayed, and arraigned before the unjust tribunals whose judgments were inspired by the most violent and fiendish hatred; He was scourged, crowned with thorns, and dragged along the road to Calvary; in this state Mary met Him, and pressed forward to embrace Him; but they pushed her back into the crowd as being the Mother of a malefactor! yet she remained ever silent, weeping and praying with her Son for these ungrateful men: for she was full of clemency. She listened as the blows of the hammer drove the nails into the hands and feet of Jesus; and clement to the end, she said: "My God, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Jesus, when dying, bequeathed to Mary as her adopted children these ungrateful men, even while they were actually putting her Son to death, and in her clemency she accepted them as children, and engaged to love them as the most loving of Mothers; aye, and to love also the sinners who, in time to come, would crucify her Divine Son afresh. Oh clement! oh royally clement Virgin Mary!

But Mary ceased not to be clement at the foot of the cross; she is clement also in heaven. She sees every outrage which we heap upon her Son, and those also which we heap upon herself; yet the moment we invoke her she turns upon us a look full of clemency, and going to her Divine Son implores our pardon. In short, just as the devil, who is the chief enemy of Mary, damns all whom he can out of his great hatred of man; so Mary, who is "terrible as an army set in battle array," against hell, saves and leads to heaven all who consent to be saved and who have recourse to her, even though they may be stained with the deepest guilt. Such is her goodness, her mercy, her clemency. The following memorable instance of this is related by

Eustachius, a Patriarch of Constantinople, who was a personal witness of it.

Theophilus, Archdeacon of the Church of Adanas, was held in such esteem that the people wished to have him for their bishop, but his humility led him to decline the honour.

Certain evil-disposed persons brought false accusations against him, in consequence of which Theophilus was deprived of his office. The bitter grief which these foul calumnies caused, led him, in the blindness of his passion, to put himself into communication with the devil, by means of a Jewish magician, hoping thus to release himself from his disgrace. We see here into what a depth of evil a calumniator may plunge his victim. The devil replied that to obtain help from him it would be necessary to renounce Jesus and Mary, writing with his own hand this act of renunciation. Theophilus wrote it out, and handed it over to the Jew. On the very next day the bishop discovered the falsehood of the accusations which had been made, and begging pardon of Theophilus reinstated him in his office.

The unhappy archdeacon felt no joy in his restoration; his soul was tortured by the most poignant remorse, and he wept without ceasing. One day, oppressed with sorrow, he went to the church, and bursting into tears, as he threw himself at the feet of an image of the Blessed Virgin, cried out: "Oh! Mother of my God, I will not give myself over to despair as long as I can have recourse to you, who are so compassionate, and who are so well able to assist me." For forty days consecutively he wept over his crime, and continued in prayer to Mary.

At length, moved by his distress, the clement Virgin appeared to him during the night, and said to him: "Theophilus, what have you done? You have renounced my friendship and that of my Son; and for whom? For your enemy and mine."

“Oh Mary!” replied the guilty man, “deign to pardon me, I beseech you, and obtain pardon for me from your Son.”

Mary, seeing his filial confidence, then said to him: “Take courage, I am going to pray to God for you.” She then disappeared, and the penitent remained where he was, weeping and entreating for mercy. After a time the good Virgin returned, and with a sweet smile, said: “Courage, Theophilus, for I have offered your tears and your prayers to God. He has accepted them, and has pardoned you. Henceforth prove your gratitude by being ever faithful in his service.”

“Holy Virgin,” replied the poor sinner, “something more is still needed to bring me complete comfort. The devil has my impious renunciation of yourself and Jesus in his possession: it is in your power to make him give it up to me.” Three days had passed, when, waking in the middle of the night, Theophilus found the fatal document lying on his breast. Next morning he went to the church, and in the presence of a large number of the faithful, cast himself at the feet of the bishop, gave him the whole history, while shedding copious tears, and put into his hands the paper which Mary had forced the devil to give up. The bishop ordered the infamous contract to be at once cast into the flames, in the presence of all the people, who all wept with joy, and extolled the goodness of God and the mercy of Mary. Theophilus then went to the church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, and threw himself on his knees before the statue in sight of which he had already shed so many tears. For three entire days he remained there, and in a short time afterwards he died, blessing the name of Mary.

PRAYER.

Virgin most clement! this is how you show yourself always merciful, even with regard to the greatest sinners, as long as they are not obstinate in offending your Divine Son, but implore your clemency.

Behold me now at your feet: I also am a poor sinner. Have pity upon me, and implore my pardon from your merciful Jesus. Never permit me to be content with an insufficient repentance which can only lull me into a false calm without blotting out my guilt. Obtain for me the grace to confess my sins with a deep and sincere repentance, so that I may not have the misfortune after my death to be for ever separated from you, but that I may eternally bless in heaven the mercy and clemency of your maternal heart.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

MARY'S MOTHERLY LOVE.

O pia Virgo Maria !

“ O pious Virgin Mary ! ”

Oh pious Virgin Mary ! O pia ! Affection, considered only as a natural virtue, is a feeling which has its source in the bonds of relationship. Thus, filial piety is the love with which nature inspires a child towards its parents.

Taken in a more general and wider sense, it signifies the love which we entertain towards our relatives, fellow-citizens, and country.

Filial love, regarded in the light of a supernatural and Christian virtue, is the love which we bear to God in his character, not only of Author of all things created, but of our Father in the order of grace. As St. Paul tells us, in his letter to the Romans : “ You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear ; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons : whereby we cry, Abba (Father). ” — *Accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum in quo clamamus, Abba, Pater.* — Rom. viii. 15.

Let us now see that, if we call Mary pious, in an especial manner, it is because all her affections are centred in God and will be so for all eternity.

I.

Filial Piety of Mary towards God.

It is easier to understand and to feel the filial love which burned in the heart of the Immaculate Virgin for God than to find words to express it.

Even could we tell all that we feel, all that we should like to say in describing the love of Mary for her God, it would be like a drop of water as compared with the entire ocean. St. Philip Neri was so consumed with Divine love that the throbbings of his heart pushed a rib from its position. St. Stanislaus was sometimes obliged to bathe his breast with cold water, in order to cool the heat produced by his love. All this, when compared with the love of Mary, was as a drop of water in comparison with the ocean.

The love of St. Ignatius of Loyola was so ardent that his life resembled one continued ecstasy. His love was such a generous love that, from the first instant of his conversion, this saint resolved to seek, during the remainder of his life, nothing but the greater glory of God. He never abandoned this heroic resolution to his latest breath, but strengthened it, day by day, with an ever-increasing love.

Even this love of sacrifice, when compared with that of Mary, is as but a drop of water compared with the ocean. Ignatius was a son of Mary, born through her with the love of God in his heart; but Mary is the "Mother of pure love," *mater pulchræ dilectionis*; she is the Mother of Divine love, just as she is the Mother of the Son of God.

In order to gain some idea of the love of Mary, compare together the two offices which she holds of Mother of Divine Love and Mother of God. In this way you may be able to form a more or less correct idea of the

Divine love of Mary. Note that as the Mother of God is immeasurably higher in dignity than the loftiest seraphim, so the love of the seraphim, great though it be, is only a feeble flame when compared to the fire which consumes the heart of the Mother of God.

Let us mount higher still, if it be possible.

The Holy Spirit is the mutual and infinite Love of the Father and of the Son. Now, this Divine Spirit descended upon Mary to work within her the adorable mystery of the Incarnation of the Word. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon Thee." *Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te.*—Luke, i. 35.

It follows, then, that as the Holy Spirit is, in the incommunicable order of the Divine Persons, the link which unites the Father to the Son, so, in the created order of grace, He unites the Blessed Virgin to the august Trinity by the link of that unspeakable love of which He is essentially the infinite source. By the abundant illumination of this Divine Spirit Mary knows God with a supernatural knowledge to which no creature will ever be able to attain. By the fire of the Holy Spirit she loved God with a comprehension which immeasurably surpassed the capacity of all other creatures. Finally, she sacrificed herself to Him as an holocaust, inferior only to that of Jesus crucified.

II.

The motherly love of Mary for Jesus Christ.

We have seen the filial piety of Mary towards God, her Lord, her Father; let us now consider her motherly love in relation to her Divine Son.

From the moment when she became the Mother of

God, the love of a mother was added on to that of a child. These two affections were concentrated upon the adorable Person of Jesus Christ, her God and her Son. Her filial love was directed to the Divine Person of the Word, her Creator and her God, "by whom all things were made"—*per quem omnia facta sunt*—*Symb. Nic.*; and her maternal love was given once more to the same Person of Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus was true man and true Son of Mary.

As the Divine Person was the one and sole Person in Jesus Christ, it follows that the filial love and the maternal love of Mary were both concentrated upon the adorable Person of Jesus, and these two loves, joined together in Divine love, without losing their individual character, filled heaven with joy. What burning love yet, at the same time, what profound reverence was in Mary's heart! What maternal tenderness and what annihilations in her sacrifice of self!

Jesus in the arms of Mary is a picture of the union which subsists between God and mankind. Here, truly, we see the "Mother of Fair Love"—*Ego Mater pulchræ dilectionis*. To the outward view she is a mother who loves her child. But if the eye of faith penetrate to the Divinity which dwells bodily and substantially in the fairest among the children of men; if we call to mind that this Child was God, and that the soul of the Mother saw in Him God hidden in the living tabernacle of a human body, how can we form a true idea of the maternal heart of Mary, at once absorbed in lowly adoration, yet all on fire with an inexpressible love?

What must have been that Divine and eternal love when Mary saw the Infant God lying in his poor crib and shivering with the cold; when, carrying Him in her arms on the journey into Egypt, and having nothing with which to appease his hunger, she begged for Him a meal given in charity; when, above all, she saw Him suffering all the shame and insult of the Passion!

Poor Mother ! what must have been her agony when she saw Him leaving the Judgment Hall with the crown of thorns piercing his brow and his body torn by the whips with which He had been scourged ? What were the feelings of her heart when she saw them laying the heavy cross upon the bleeding shoulders of her beloved Son, that cross on which He was about to die ?

What were the feelings of her heart when she saw Him fall fainting upon the road to Calvary, and bearing, without a murmur, the blows with which his executioners forced Him to rise ? What were the feelings of her heart when she heard the blows of the hammer which drove the nails through the hands and the feet of Jesus ? What were the feelings of her heart when, standing beneath the cross, there fell upon her, drop by drop, the blood of the most innocent, the most loving of Sons ? What were the feelings of her heart when she received the lifeless and mangled body of Jesus upon her knees ? And, when she pressed her lips to the riven hands and to the wound of the Sacred Heart, what were the feelings of her mother's heart ?

This pious sorrow, interrupted only by the glorious mysteries, took possession anew of the heart of Mary after the Ascension and never left her to the moment of her holy death. So long as she dwelt in Jerusalem she went daily, as St. Ildephonsus tells us, to visit Calvary ; she watered, with her tears, the holy stations of the Way of the Cross, and covered, with her Mother's kisses, the bleeding footprints of the Saviour.

Yet, there is still another kind of maternal piety in Mary ; it is that which she has felt towards men, ever since they became her children.

It was on Calvary, indeed it was from meditating on the Passion of Jesus, that she conceived her tender love for men and her ardent thirst for their salvation. When she became our Mother, at the foot of the cross, she

transferred to us the love she had for her Divine Son. How can she help loving mankind when she sees us all bathed in the blood of her Jesus? How can she refrain from pitying the wounds which sin has inflicted on us, and of which the wounds of her expiring Son were at once the expiation and the bleeding symbol?

How can she refrain from devoting herself, following the example of Jesus, to the salvation of souls, after having seen all the blood of her Son flow forth for them?

She had seen that beloved Son, weary and exhausted by his search for the wandering sheep; she had seen Him thirsting for great torture and shame, so that they, by these, might be snatched from hell; she had seen Him feeding our poor souls with His own flesh and blood, so as to support and strengthen them on their way to heaven, till the end of time. Thus, her heart became for them all mercy and love.

It is, above all, since her elevation to glory that the maternal piety of Mary towards the children of men has shone out so brightly.

Filled with heavenly light and all on fire with love for God and for her Divine Son, she beholds the living image of God in each one of us, in each of the members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and loves each with a love measured by that which she bears towards God Himself. Thus, she interests herself as a Mother in all that concerns the eternal salvation of souls. She sees all in God and in her Divine Son; she sees the poverty and misery of men in the poverty of the Child Jesus at Bethlehem, and their sufferings in the sufferings of Jesus dying.

As a tender and compassionate Mother, she would put an end to all our sufferings of body and soul if those afflictions were not for us the conditions of expiation, of merit, and of glory. But, when it is a question of sin—which is the only real evil to man or God—of

sin, which renews the Passion of her Jesus and condemns men to eternal misery, never will she reject the prayer of the greatest criminal who has recourse to her as the Mother of Mercy; never will she allow those to fall into sin who invoke her with a filial confidence as the "Help of Christians."—*Auxilium Christianorum.*

PRAYER.

Oh, Mary, Mother of Mercy! remember me, a poor sinner, banished into this valley of tears and subject to so many miseries. Since Jesus on the cross willed that you should be our Mother, and that you should extend to us the Motherly love you had ever borne to Him, show me, also, your Mother's heart. Sinner as I am, what will become of me if you abandon me? Oh, most loving Mother of Jesus! be to me a most merciful Mother. Virgin most pious—Vessel of singular and filial devotion towards God and towards Jesus Christ! mould me, guide me, as you formed and guided the Blessed Margaret Mary, that confidential friend of the Sacred Heart, and so many other saints. Help me to allow myself to be led and governed by this sacrificing love of yours, and, in your loving care of me, grant that my last act of love and my last word here below may be an act of most pure love of Jesus Christ.—Amen.

Ave Maria.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

THE SWEETNESS OF MARY.

O dulcis Virgo Maria !
“ Oh sweet Virgin Mary.”

Let us now end the *Salve Regina* by meditating joyously upon the graces and sweetness of the Beloved Virgin of virgins ; that so she may lead us to the adorable Heart of Jesus, that fountain of sweetness and holy love.

“ Oh sweet Virgin Mary !” Can anyone who really knows the Blessed Virgin, pronounce these words without deep emotion ? Will not the most suffering of souls feel consoled ; will they not feel a return of hope and heavenly joy, when repeating this invocation, the sweetest which the tongue of man can address to the most tender of mothers ?

“ Oh sweet Virgin Mary !” There are in these words three beautiful thoughts which we shall now ponder. The Queen of Heaven is a Virgin, she is sweet, and her name is Mary.

I.*Mary is a Virgin.*

Mary is a Virgin. Before her, the glories of virginity were unknown to the world. After her, innumerable bands of virgins have been called to “ follow the

Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and to sing a canticle which no others know how to sing.”—Apoc. xiv. 4.

Mary is the Virgin of virgins, the Queen of virgins; and she is as far above all other virgins as virgins are above those who have not preserved the glory of virginity.

Now those privileged souls are called virgins who for love of Jesus Christ have consecrated their bodies to God by an offering of perfect chastity. This consecration of the body has for its object the pure love of God, and it is an offering which is all fair and full of beauty in the sight of heaven; but the very glory and essence of full virginity consists in that perfect purity which has its dwelling-place in the soul. The perfection of this purity of soul consists not only in the exclusion of sins of sensuality, but of every kind of sin whatsoever. If then we represent to ourselves a soul which is free not only from all actual sin, either venial or mortal, but from even the slightest imperfection, we reach the concept of a degree of perfection to which no one attains in this world; for the Holy Spirit teaches that, “The just man falls seven times:” *Septies enim cadet justus*.—Prov. xxiv. 6.

Let us go higher still. Let us add to all these perfections of virginity the absence of all original stain, the Immaculate Conception itself, and we are contemplating the Virgin of virgins, Mary, always immaculate, of whom alone the Holy Ghost could say: “Thou art all beautiful, my love, and there is no spot in thee.” *Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te*. This is why we especially call Mary “The Blessed Virgin.” All other virgins are holy in heaven; but when we speak of the Blessed Virgin we apply to her a name which belongs to her alone, and which distinguishes and exalts her above all others; for she alone was ever holy and always immaculate, and her virginity, exempt from the least stain, grew in its splendour up

to the time of her glorious death, and shone with an ever-increasing lustre of perfect purity.

And since such a prodigy and masterpiece of creation was possible to the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God, it was befitting that the Almighty should thus exercise his creative power, in order to give all the honour possible, both to the Incarnation of his Son and the maternity of Mary. Surely a Virgin less perfect could not have been worthy to become the Mother of God! Was it not necessary that she who was to give birth to Him who is infinite purity, should be a Virgin in the highest sense of the term? Thus, after having said that Mary pleased God by her humility, St. Bernard adds that she conceived Jesus by her virginity: *humilitate placuit, virginitate concepit*. It was only on this condition that the Blessed Trinity consented to co-operate in the mystery of the Incarnation, in which God the Father, as St. Anselm says, in the Office of the Church, had to give Mary his only Son, whom He had begotten from all eternity: his Son, the express image of Himself, consubstantial with Himself, and loved with an infinite love, so that Jesus was naturally the only Son of the Father of Heaven, and, at the same time, the Son of Mary: a mystery in which God the Son had to take Mary for his Mother; a mystery, lastly, in which the Holy Ghost had to form from and in the body of Mary Him from whom He Himself proceeds.

Is it possible to give higher praise to the glory of virginity, even to virginity as it existed exclusively in Mary?

We shall now be able to understand the full meaning of the well-known saying of St. Bernard: "It was fitting that a God should be born only of a Virgin, and that a Virgin should give birth to none but God." *Deum hujusmodi decebat natiuitas, qua non nisi de Virgine nasceretur. Talis congruebat Virgini partus ut non pareret nisi Deum.*

II.

Mary is Sweet.

“Oh sweet Virgin!” *O dulcis Virgo!* Sweetness, that lovely virtue which is the sister of charity, is the child of two other virtues: namely, innocence and humility. Innocence becomes the parent of goodness, as we so commonly see in children who are piously and religiously brought up. When innocence is consecrated to God by a vow of virginity, this goodness begets those angels upon earth whom we call Sisters of Charity and Little Sisters of the Poor, to whom even the most brutalised and hardened are forced to give way.

But this sweet goodness would not be able to withstand the trial of injustice and ingratitude unless it rested upon the foundation of true and unfeigned humility. For this reason, Jesus, in teaching us to be meek and gentle, taught us, at the same time, to be humble of heart. “Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart.” *Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde.*

Next to her Son, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin was the most humble and the most innocent creature ever produced by the hands of God. We have already spoken of the perfection of her innocence and of her virginity. As regards humility, the Blessed Virgin surpassed all the saints in both the greatness and in the grace of this virtue.

Though the Mother of God, she called herself only the handmaid or servant of God: *Ecce ancilla Domini*; and when she praised the magnificence of God’s bounty towards her, she said that He had looked down upon

the lowliness of his servant : *resperit humilitatem ancillæ suæ*. She submitted to the Law of Purification just as if she had contracted some defilement. During the Passion she allowed herself to be treated as if she were the mother of a malefactor, accepting with the greatest patience every kind of opprobrium at the foot of the cross, yet without attempting to justify either her Son or herself.

This exceeding great humility was united in Mary to an unspeakable virginal goodness, and produced within her, as it were, an ocean of untold sweetness which, after having rejoiced the earthly Jerusalem, will become the eternal delight of the Jerusalem that is in heaven.

“ Oh, sweet Virgin ! ” *O dulcis Virgo !* Yes ; if she were not sweet, would her children in every part of the world have recourse to her on all occasions ? Would little children and youths and maidens, who are ever in search of kindness and sweetness, feel themselves drawn to love, as if by a sort of instinct, this sweet and gracious Virgin ? And when men, guilty of some sin, scarcely dare to raise, as we say, their eyes towards the throne of God, fearing to encounter the terrible look of offended Divine Justice, would they turn with such confidence to the ever-blessed Virgin if they did not know that by her they are sure to be received with a sweetness that is full of mercy ? Would the afflicted go, would they even cause themselves to be carried in crowds to the sanctuaries of Mary, if the compassionate sweetness of our Good Lady was not known in all countries and in all ages ?

Ask the thousands of pilgrims who go to the Grotto of Lourdes what they seek for and what they find on the banks of the river Gave, and they will tell you, without any exception, The sweet and ever bounteous Immaculate Virgin. And countless numbers of sick persons who have been healed, and of sinners who have

been converted, will give the same answer, while tears of devotion, gratitude, and love flow from their eyes.

III.

The Virgin's name is Mary.

“And the name of the Virgin was Mary.” *Et nomen Virginis Maria.* Thus far in our meditations upon the *Salve Regina*, we have seen our ever blessed and bountiful Mother described by attributes which are most suited to glorify her, and to awaken a lively confidence in her power and goodness; we have called her Queen, Mother of Mercy, our Advocate, the sweet, pious, and clement Virgin.

But the name which is the sweetest of all names after that of Jesus, has not yet been mentioned in the *Salve Regina*. This name, which contains in itself all else that has been said in her praise, is the closing word of our heavenly antiphon. It is like the apparition of Mary herself at the ending of this most beautiful prayer: “Oh, sweet Virgin Mary!”

In the same way, as we see from the Gospel, did the Holy Ghost defer uttering the name of Mary, and only pronounced it after having given a short history of the event preceding her becoming the Mother of God. Thus we read: “And in the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, *and the Virgin's name was Mary.*” *Et nomen Virginis Maria* (Luke, i. 26, 27).

Mary! that holy and heaven-sprung name, blessed

in heaven and on the earth, suggests all the glories and all the graces of the Mother of God. *Mary*, by which is meant "Sovereign," but such a sovereign that her sovereignty rises to the level of the dignity befitting the Mother of the Lord of all creation. *Mary*, that is to say, "Star of the Sea"—Star from which came forth the Sun itself of Justice, Jesus Christ; Star, which guides, which saves, which rejoices the poor mariners who are battling with the storms which rage in the treacherous ocean of this world. *Mary*, oh sweetest of all human names, as the Holy Ghost tells us Himself, in the Book of the Canticles: "Thy name is as oil poured forth." *Oleum effusum nomen tuum* (Cant. i. 2). "As oil heals the wounded," writes the Blessed Alanus, "and diffuses a sweet fragrance, while it gives forth flame and light, so the name of Mary heals the wounds of sin, refreshes souls, and enkindles in them the fire of Divine love. The number of the sinners whom Mary has converted and led to Paradise is beyond all calculation, while as for the souls that have been consoled, strengthened and sustained by the name of Mary, we can only say that their number is the number of all those who have ever invoked her.

Of all the souls which are burning with Divine love, is there one in which that blessed flame has not been enkindled, kept alive, and increased by the "Mother of Fair Love?"

Let us call to mind how this loving and lovable Mother lit up that beautiful fire in the heart of the little child, who was to be known in after days as the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas. This child of predilection was carried one day by his nurse, in his mother's company, to the house of a friend, and it was suddenly noticed that he was holding a piece of paper tightly grasped in his hand. The nurse could not imagine how or where the boy had picked it up. She first of all tried to open his hand in order to take it

from him, but Thomas resisted with tears; and so they had to leave him in quiet possession of his strange treasure, which he carried home without having relaxed his hold of it for an instant. Such resistance was so unusual with him, that his mother forcibly unclosed the hand of her little angel, without giving heed to his cries and tears. Only two words were written on the piece of paper: *Ave Maria*.

Happy child! to know so early in life that he had a Mother in heaven as well as one upon earth, and to be aware of the fascination of the name of Mary. Happy all who know, who love, and who invoke the holy name of Mary.

Accustomed to have that sweet and powerful name on their lips, they will merit to have it in their mouths at their last hour, and to die, calling the Blessed Virgin to their assistance; and thus will they be as sure of their salvation as we are sure of the goodness of Mary.

Father Theodoric Canisius, brother of the Blessed Peter Canisius, and also a member of the Society of Jesus, gained the name of "Father Jesus-Mary," not only because he so frequently invoked those holy names, but also because he received a miraculous favour which that filial invocation won for him, according to the account given by one of the writers of the Society. He went to Fribourg, on a certain day, to visit his brother, the Blessed Peter, who, knowing by revelation the hour of his approaching death, said to Theodoric, as they were taking leave of each other: "You little know the effect which will be produced upon you by the unexpected news of my death."

Theodoric returned to Lucerne, where he resided. Now, one day when he was at table with the rest of the community, the reader announced the death of the Blessed Peter Canisius, in order that the accustomed prayers might be offered for his soul. At that instant Father Theodoric was seized with a stroke of apoplexy,

which brought on the complete loss of his memory, so that he could no longer read or speak. But although he could not remember other names, not even his own, and was quite unable to articulate a single word, he still preserved the memory of two names, and two only, those of Jesus and Mary; both of which he recognised in writing when he saw them, and both of which he was able to pronounce. After frequently trying in vain to read anything else, the two beloved names of Jesus and Mary were written for him in large characters upon a sheet of paper; and these he read and pronounced almost constantly, to his unspeakable consolation. During five or six years that followed he was able to catch, more or less, the sense of what was read to him; but then there came a relapse, and for two years he understood nothing whatever when they read to him except the names of Jesus and Mary, which he never grew wearied of hearing, and repeated without ceasing.

His paralysed arm was useless to him in all other respects, yet he could use it without difficulty when he wanted to make the sign of the cross upon himself. Thus the poor Father was left deprived of all but Jesus, Mary, and that sacred sign: beyond these not a vestige remained of his past life. When the end was at hand, and when Extreme Unction had been administered to him, he, who during eight years had only been able to say Jesus and Mary, cried aloud, in a rapture of joy: "To heaven! to heaven!" and then began to repeat as usual: "Jesus, Mary; Jesus, Mary." Shortly after he had received the last Sacraments, the paralysed arm could not be moved even to trace the sacred sign of the cross; he could only murmur those well-beloved names very slowly and with a long pause between each. Then summoning all his strength, he succeeded in pronouncing, for the last time, the name of Jesus; a few moments later he began the name of Mary, but death came after he had finished the first syllable, and he

went to see Jesus and Mary in Paradise. After his death the mark of a cross was clearly visible upon his forehead, which no one had ever noticed before. Happy such a death, accompanied so visibly by proofs of Mary's special protection.

PRAYER.

Oh Mary, the most loving of mothers and the sweetest of virgins ! at the conclusion of this little work, which I have consecrated to you, I ask the grace of a holy death. Never permit me to forsake you ; and thus my petition will assuredly be granted, for it is certain that no servant of yours shall ever perish. Let me always be your child, and do you always be my Mother. Could I possibly abandon you, you who have loved me so tenderly, and who, despite my sins and my ingratitude, have loaded me with so many benefits ? Ah ! if ever I forget you, may my right hand wither ; and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if ever I cease to invoke and to love you.

“ Oh clement, oh pious, oh sweet Virgin Mary ! ”

TO THE GLORY
OF THE HEART OF JESUS,
AND OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
MOTHER OF GOD.

HOLY MASS.



METHOD OF HEARING MASS IN REMEMBRANCE OF JESUS
SUFFERING, AND IN UNION WITH THE MOTHER OF
SORROWS.

*Intention before Mass.*

My Lord and my God ! in union with the most loving Heart of Jesus, immolated now upon our altars, as once upon Calvary, and in company with his Blessed and Sorrowful Mother, I offer to Thee this Holy Sacrifice, truly worthy of thy Divine Majesty, as an infinite homage of adoration, of love, and of glory ; as an homage of thanksgiving for the benefits which Thou hast showered upon all creatures, and especially upon myself ; as an infinite homage of expiation for the sins of the whole world, and above all for my own sins, and as an infinite satisfaction for the souls in purgatory : lastly, as an infinite homage of impetration for the salvation of all men, and in particular for my own salvation and perfection ; as well as for the preservation and exaltation of our faith in Christ Jesus.

In union with all the saints who have loved Thee, oh, Jesus ! on Calvary, and in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, but more than all, in union with thy most tender, most loving, and most afflicted Mother, I desire to compassionate all the sorrows which Thou didst endure for

me in thy Passion. Grant me, oh, Jesus ! by the love of thy Sacred Heart, and do thou, too, oh, Virgin Mother of Sorrows ! obtain for me from thy Son and sweet Lord, the grace to feel a deep sorrow for his sufferings, and that my heart may be torn with compassion for the Heart of Jesus, broken by suffering.

Oh, Mother ! whose heart is love, and the source of love in others, help me to feel how terrible were the torments of Jesus, so that I may grieve over them with thee. Light up within my heart the flame of the love of Christ my God, and cause it to burn more and more, so that I may give consolation to his Divine Heart. Pierce all my heart, oh, holy Mother ! with the nails and with the lance of Jesus. Since thy beloved Son was so cruelly wounded for me, and for me deigned to suffer so much, grant that I may share in his pains. Let me weep with thee, poor Mother, and may I keep the wounds of Jesus crucified imprinted on my heart as long as I may live. It is at the foot of his cross, and by thy side, that I desire to unite myself with thee, in thy Mother's pity for her Child.

At the beginning of Mass.

Oh, Good Jesus, Eternal and Infinite God, and Lord of all created things ! Loving me with an eternal love, Thou hast deigned to make Thyself Man like unto myself, in order to come down to my level.

For my sake, Thou didst accept a life of humiliation and suffering ; Thou wast born in a stable, with a manger for thy cradle ; Thou didst shed thy blood in circumcision ; Thou didst fly into Egypt, to add to all the sufferings of poverty the pain of exile. Thou didst deign to humiliate and sacrifice Thyself for me, by being baptised like a sinner, and by permitting the devil to tempt Thee in the wilderness : Thou didst

weary Thyself in watching, in teaching, in preaching, and in comforting all in misfortune. During three and thirty years, Thou didst endure every kind of toil, of sorrow, and of persecution, until the moment when Thou didst go up to Jerusalem, there to die for me. I unite myself to thy Mother, the inseparable companion of all thy sufferings; I desire to compassionate with her all those so many sorrows. Would that the sword which Simeon prophesied should pierce her heart, might pierce mine as well. Alas! how often have I wounded her Mother's heart by piercing thine, oh, Jesus, with the sword of my sins! Pardon me, my dear Redeemer, pardon me, oh kind Mother! Why can I not, at least, wash away my sins by my tears: sins which Jesus is now once more about to wash away with his Blood, on this holy altar! Lord, have mercy on me. Christ, have mercy on me. Lord, have mercy on me.

After having eaten the Paschal Lamb with thy disciples, oh, good Jesus, Thou didst wash their feet on thy knees, and wipe them gently with the linen cloth with which Thou wast girded. Wash me also, my dear Saviour, and not my feet only, but also, and above all, my heart and my soul, so that I may be pure enough to assist at these holy mysteries. Mary, turn towards me the merciful countenance of Jesus, and let his look fill me all my life with the filial sorrow with which it filled the heart of the repentant Peter.

At the Epistle.

Oh, good Jesus, before going to torture and to death, Thou didst leave to thy disciples and to us the richest of all thy gifts and the greatest proof of thy love, giving us thy most Holy Body as our food, and thy most precious Blood as our drink. Oh, infinite abyss of love! so well understood by the beloved disciple who was to fill thy

place in the home of thy most afflicted Mother, and who, during the institution of this Divine Mystery, leant his head upon thy Sacred Heart. For when he began to describe that so unspeakable love, he seems to have laid down his pen as soon as he had written the words : " Having loved his own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." But I, oh Jesus ! how often have I remained icy cold when assisting at this renewal of that scene of love, when eating thy Flesh and drinking thy Blood ; when visiting Thee, shut up within the tabernacle, oh Divine Prisoner of love !

At the Gospel.

Oh, good Jesus ! after having instituted the most Blessed Sacrament, the greatest of all the pledges of thy love, and after having sung the hymn of thanksgiving, Thou didst go forth straightway unto thy Passion, passing from one abyss of love to another abyss of still greater love. Thou didst go at the setting in of that fearful night to the garden of Olives, and there Thou didst permit every kind of sorrow to come upon Thee and enter into the innermost recesses of thy heart. And then began that scandal of which Thou hadst just forewarned thy Disciples ; for the presence and action of thy Divinity was hidden away, so that thy Sacred Humanity appeared alone, covered with the whole world's iniquities, and crushed beneath the weight of Divine wrath and justice. Then, oh good Saviour of my soul ! seized with horror at the sight of the crimes of all mankind, by which Thou wast loaded, Thou, oh Holy of Holies ! didst enter into an agony, and overcome by weariness, and bent down with sorrow, Thou didst say to thy disciples : " My soul is sorrowful even unto death." And receiving from them no word of consolation, Thou didst go alone to the entrance of the grotto,

and there, prostrate upon the ground, and filled with reverence and with fear, Thou didst pray during two hours to thy Father in heaven : “ Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me, nevertheless, thy will, not mine, be done.” Thy sufferings kept on increasing, ever, and at last in the agony of thy heart, thy Sacred Blood began to flow from all the pores of thy most holy body, bedewing thy garments, and dropping upon the ground. Oh Mary, immaculate Virgin ! thou alone hast never caused the tears or the blood of Jesus to flow ; for thy soul, being always pure, did never sadden the heart of thy Divine Son by any infidelity. But I, thankless and cruel as I am, towards a God who has loved me so much, I have steeped his soul in bitter anguish by my many sins. Obtain for me, oh Mother of Mercy ! a true repentance and contrition of soul, and full pardon of all mine iniquity.

At the Credo.

Oh, good Jesus ! burning with exceeding desire to redeem me by thy blood, Thou didst go forth to meet thine enemies, and Thou didst receive the infamous kiss of the traitor Judas, the kiss which was the prelude to the many sacrilegious Communions that would be made during the course of centuries. Afterwards Thou didst allow Thyself to be bound by the impious and barbarous rabble, who dragged Thee from the Mount of Olives down to the valley of Jehosophat, buffeting Thee, spitting on Thee, hooting at Thee, blaspheming Thee, striking Thee, and throwing Thee to the ground several times upon the way to the dungeon. And Thou, the victim of such cruel and ignominious treatment, didst not open thy mouth in complaint, O Lamb of God ! Thou didst allow Thyself to be fastened to the pillar in the Court of Annas, that they might thus load Thee with fresh outrages, and in

the presence of the most wicked High-Priest, Thou didst receive, without rancour, the cruel blow inflicted by the miscreant whose relative Thou hadst so lately healed by a miracle. Having next appeared before Caiphas, bound with ropes, as a common malefactor, and found worthy of death, Thou didst pass the night in a frightful jail, where the Jews poured forth all the stock of their hellish fury upon Thee, spewing out their phlegm upon Thee, showering blows upon Thee, blindfolding thy adorable face, and crying out, as each one smote Thee in his turn: "Prophecy, O Christ, who is it that struck Thee;" and adding countless other insults which will only be made known to us at the last judgment. And all this, O Jesus, Thou didst suffer for me; and as much do those still cause Thee to suffer, who not being Jews, but Christians redeemed by thy blood, give themselves up to a life of sin, and who, like the Pagans, know Thee not, but blaspheme Thee, and strike Thee by their obscene tongues, and the profane writings of their hands, and who persecute Thee unceasingly in the persons of thy ministers, who are the consecrated members of thy Mystic Body, the Church.

At the Offertory.

Oh, good Jesus! led at dawn of day once more before the tribunal of the Jewish High-Priests, and condemned to death, and dragged thence to the judgment-hall of Pilate, where, with eyes cast down, and thy face beaming with sweet gentleness and all kindness, Thou wert made to stand as a criminal awaiting thy final sentence! There wast Thou loaded with insults and false accusations, and didst remain silent, draining willingly the contents of that chalice of dishonour, and uttering no single word in justification of Thyself.

Nor was this all, oh Jesus; Thou didst choose to go

down into the lowest abyss of humiliation, didst allow Thyself to be looked upon not only as a criminal, but as one bereft of reason : Thou who art the Word of God and the Infinite Wisdom ! Pilate sent Thee to Herod. Herod, being curious to see Thee work some wonder, questioned Thee, while the Jews continued to make false accusations against Thee, nor didst Thou speak one word in the presence of that lewd king. To conceal the humiliation of a defeat, he strove to humble Thee, by making Thee, my Lord and my God, pass for a fool, and having clothed Thee in the dress of one mad, mocked Thee with all his troops, and thus sent Thee back again to Pilate. Oh fathomless depth of humility and submission ! Thou didst go hither and thither at the beck of thy inhuman keepers, without making any resistance, insulted by the cries and shouts of the dregs of the people, as Thou didst pass by along the road. Oh ! the mystery of the folly of the cross !

At the Preface.

Oh, good Jesus ! I see Thee at the Pretorium of Pilate, in the place where they scourged the slaves. They strip Thee of thy garments, they bind Thee cruelly to a pillar and begin to give Thee many hundreds of strokes with whips and thongs and chains. All thy delicate and virginal flesh is mangled, and the blood which flows from every wound of thy Sacred Body trickles down upon the ground. Thus is the prophecy accomplished : " They numbered all my bones." After this barbarous scourging which made thy whole body, as it were, one vast wound, the soldiers clothe Thee in a left-off garment of purple, and then they make a crown, with long sharp thorns, which they drive into thy Sacred Head with blows from the reed which they gave Thee for a sceptre. Thy hair and thy Divine

Face are bathed in blood, and to complete their outrages, they mock Thee as Thou holdest in thy hand the reed, the mock symbol of a royal sceptre; with brutal scoffing, they bend their knees before Thee, saying: "Hail, King of the Jews!" and taking from Thee the reed, strike thy thorn-crowned head, spitting into thy face, and striking Thee with their fists. In this condition, oh Jesus, did Pilate expose Thee to the assembled multitude; in this state it was that Thou wast afterwards seen by thy most holy Mother.

For she was there: she heard the "Behold the Man," *Ecce Homo*; she heard also the truculent mob cry out: "Crucify Him, Crucify Him." Oh poor Mother! from this time forth thou wilt never lose sight of thy Divine Son, until He has reached the hill of Calvary and until He has been laid in the Sepulchre.

Neither will I abandon thee in the dolorous way of the cross; always near thee, and always with thee, I will compassionate the sufferings of thy Son, the most loving of all sons.

At the Canon.

Oh good Jesus! the moment of immolation is near at hand; Thou dost return to the Pretorium to receive the formal sentence of death. The cowardly judge takes his place on the judgment-seat, while Thou, oh Jesus, art forced to stand up before him, crowned with thorns, and thy arms bound with fetters. Pilate washes his hands, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man," and, notwithstanding, he condemns Thee to death, and abandons Thee to all the fury of the Jews, who drag Thee away amid the triumphant shouts of thy enemies. Then thy Mother meets Thee again; she sees the heavy cross on which Thou art to die, and which they have laid upon thy bruised and bleeding shoulder, for Thee to carry it to the very top of Mount

Calvary. Oh, Mary! the most blessed among women and the most sorrowful of Mothers, in thy company I desire to follow after Christ Jesus. Teach me to compassionate the martyrdom of both Mother and Son.

Three times, oh Jesus, Thou fallest beneath the weight of the cross; Mary forces her way to come near Thee, her eyes meet thine. Oh what a sword of anguish must that recognition have been for the Son and for the Mother! Oh Mary! I unite myself to the Heart of Jesus to compassionate thy sorrows. Oh Jesus! I unite myself to the heart of Mary, to compassionate thy sorrows. Cast on me, I conjure you both, a glance of mercy; draw me to you, make me live for you alone.

At the Consecration.

Oh good Jesus! I see Thee arrived on the summit of Calvary, that hill of shame, the place set aside for the execution of criminals and the refuse of the City of Jerusalem.

The cross is there lying on the ground, and Thou art standing beside it. They tear off all thy clothing, thus reopening thy wounds, and again the blood streams down all thy Sacred Body. What must have been the anguish of thy most afflicted Mother when she saw Thee in this sad plight, stricken as a leper, and no longer to be recognised: thy head one mass of blood, all thy face made foul with dirt and spittle! What must she have suffered when she saw Thee, at the bidding of the executioners, stretch Thyself upon the cross, and offer them thy hands and thy feet to be nailed to it! What must have been her agony when she heard the blows of the hammer which drove the nails, one after the other, into those blessed hands which she had so often covered with her kisses, and those feet which had ever wearied themselves going in search of all in sin and misery!

And now, oh good Jesus! they lift aloft the cross, letting it drop into the hole prepared for it; and Thou art made a spectacle to heaven and to earth. All heaven weeps, while the earth curses Thee, watered though it is and saved by thy blood. And Thou, my Jesus, bestowest pardon on thy very executioners! "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." The malefactor crucified at thy side, and who just now was blaspheming Thee, is converted in seeing the sweetness of thy Heart, and Thou sayest to him: "Amen, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Near to thy cross, standing there erect, pale with suffering, her heart crushed with grief, Thou seest thy most holy Mother. Thou biddest her a last farewell, and givest her for her son, John, the disciple so beloved of thy heart: "Woman, behold thy Son—Son behold thy Mother." After this heart-breaking farewell, Calvary, Jerusalem, the whole earth are covered with a thick darkness. And Thou, good Jesus, Thou dost remain three hours alive upon the cross, hanging to it by thy hands, which the nails cease not to tear, the weight of all thy body resting on thy pierced feet, while thy blood runs out from thy wounds upon the ground and upon thy poor Mother. Oh most loving, most afflicted Mother, how sharp was the sword which pierced thy heart while thou didst stand near and didst watch the death-throes of thy Son upon the cross! Oh blessed amongst all women, what must have been the sorrow and the affliction of thy maternal heart, when seeing thy fondly loved Son die this kind of death! Who is there so hard of heart as not to weep on seeing the Mother of Christ Jesus in such cruel pain? Who can remain unmoved when he beholds thee, the tenderest of Mothers, suffering with thy Divine Son?

Oh Mother, oh thou, whose heart is a very furnace of burning love, pierce my heart with a heaven-sent shaft, that so I may weep tear for tear with thee!

Make my heart burn with love for Christ, my God, who has loved me so much. Oh admirable Virgin of virgins, turn not away from me thy merciful eyes, and teach me to grieve with thee. Help me to carry the death of Jesus ever in my heart, so that I may have share in his sufferings, and that his wounds may be engraven on my soul. I desire to be wounded by his wounds, and for love of thy Son, Jesus, to become a partaker of the torments which He endured upon his cross.

At the Pater.

Oh good Jesus! after three hours of agony on the cross, Thou didst disperse the darkness which had come upon the earth, and, lo! Thou wast again made visible to the eyes of men. Oh Jesus, how great a change was to be seen in Thee! Thy adorable body, now drained of its blood, is clothed with the pallor of death; thy dying lips are parched, and Thou sayest: "I thirst;" thy savage executioners offer Thee nothing but a sponge steeped in vinegar. Left a lonely outcast by those who caused thy death; about to leave the Mother Thou hadst bequeathed to us; given over by thy Father to all the rigour of his justice, Thou complainest piteously to heaven: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Oh Mary, most kind and tender Mother, what a blow must these words have given to thy heart! Thou, oh Jesus, hast accomplished all the will of thy Father and all that the Prophets had predicted concerning Thee. "It is consummated Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." See, oh Mary, thy Jesus utters a loud cry and gives up the ghost. Weep now, poor Mother, weep as thou wilt: no longer needest thou fear that thy tears shall increase the sufferings of thy Divine Son.

At the Communion.

Oh good Jesus, oh loving shepherd of our souls, who hast given thy blood for thy sheep, Thou didst allow yet another outrage after thy death, permitting them to wound thy Heart! The Centurion draws near, burying his spear in thy Sacred Side: he runs it through thy Sacred Heart. That well-spring of Divine mercy is opened; that fountain flows freely. The blood and the water which issue from thy Divine Heart purify and sanctify first, and before all others, the person who opened for us the treasure and the joy of heaven and of earth. O tender, loving, merciful Heart of Jesus! have pity also upon me; wash me in the water that flowed from thy sacred side; inebriate me with the most holy Blood which sprang from the furnace itself of Divine love, that so I in my turn may be inflamed with love of Thee! And do thou, oh Mother of Sorrows! remember what thou didst feel when thou sawest that Heart pierced through, which had so loved thee, and was ever so beloved of thee. The lance could inflict no pain on Jesus, who was already dead, but the iron entered into his Mother's loving heart. Oh, good Mother, hide me in that sweetest of wounds, the wound in the Sacred Heart, so that I may never be so unhappy as to offend Him again, who has loved me with so much love.

After the Communion.

Oh, Mary, most afflicted Mother, what were the feeling of thy maternal heart when thou didst see Joseph, Nicodemus, and John tearfully removing the nails from the hands and feet of Jesus, and taking down from the cross his Sacred and most beloved Body! Seated on the ground, and dying thyself of grief, thou didst beg

them to place thy Son upon thy knees, saying: "Jesus, my Son! Give me my Son, Jesus!" And having received Him all lifeless and bleeding into thy arms, with what love didst thou cover with kisses his disfigured face, his wounded hands, and, above all, the wound of his Heart!

Oh most afflicted Virgin Mother, I compassionate thee shedding torrents of tears when thou didst follow the dead Body of Jesus as they carried it to the Holy Sepulchre; when thou didst contemplate Him in his last earthly resting-place, so chilled in death; when thou didst return to Jerusalem in the company of St. John and the holy women! Oh, be always my Mother, and teach me to know, to love, and to imitate out of love the good Master who loved me so deeply as even to die for me!

Concluding Prayer.

Oh sweet, innocent Lamb of God, thus, then, hast Thou loved me! All this hast Thou done and endured for me with so many humiliations, so much patience, and so much loving kindness! And now, what ought I to do and what suffer for Thee? What return can I make to Thee, O good Jesus, for so much love? I adore Thee, I praise Thee, and I glorify Thee in union with thy Blessed Mother and the whole Court of Heaven; and I bless Thee and return thanks to Thee with all the fervour of my poor heart. Hail, sweet Jesus, Son of the living God, King of kings, King of glory! Hail, peerless pearl of the heavenly nobility! Oh most loving Redeemer, have mercy on me according to thy unfailing goodness! Blot out all my sins. Destroy in me all that is displeasing to Thee. Let the inner man in me be moulded to the pattern of thine own Heart; and imprint upon my soul the likeness of thy Sacred Humanity. Permit me, O good Master, to follow Thee and imitate Thee as closely as my poor strength allows.

Oh, Heavenly Father ! for my salvation and the salvation of all men, for our amendment and for the expiation of our sins, I offer thee the most holy Incarnation, the Life and the Passion of thy beloved Son. By this same only begotten Son, Oh, merciful Father ! give to the living thy pardon and thy holy grace, and to the faithful departed rest and eternal light. Amen.

OPENING OF THE MONTH OF MARY.

A MEDITATION FOR THE EVE OF THE FIRST OF MAY.

“The winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. Arise, my love, and come.”

Jam hiems transiit, imber abiit et recessit. Surge amica mea et veni. Cant. ii. 11.

In these words God speaks to Mary, the Immaculate Virgin, his beloved Daughter, the Mother of his Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. The long ages of the winter season, with their darkness and heavy gloom have passed away, and the Sun of Justice is about to shine upon the earth. May the heavenly Aurora, she who is to bring forth that long-desired Sun, she who is to give us Jesus, show herself at length to the world! Arise, O spotless Virgin, the beloved of my heart, arise and come.

These same words Jesus addresses to every faithful soul when about to quit the earth. The winter is past, He says: the dark days of this sorrowful life are now closing for you. Arise, beloved, much tried soul; to heaven! to heaven!

But, at the opening of this beautiful month, does not Mary also seem to say to you who are her faithful child: The sombre season of winter is over, the cold rains, and the icy frosts have disappeared: Arise, child of Mary, and come to visit her at her altar. This is the month which gives back life to nature, and causes the flowers to bloom. Come, offer flowers to your mother: they are symbols of her virtue and of your love.

Why do we consecrate an entire month to Mary? Why do we choose the month of May in preference to the other months? What can we do to celebrate this month of Mary properly? The reply to these three questions will be a fitting preparation for a devotion so pleasing to the Blessed Virgin, and so full of sweetness to the children of the Church.

1° *Why do we consecrate a whole month to Mary?* To fix devotion to the Blessed Virgin more deeply within our hearts, Holy Church, which consecrates only a day or an octave to her festivals, has judged it necessary to devote a much longer time to some great mysteries which are, as it were, the foundations of our faith. Thus she consecrates four weeks to the mystery of the Incarnation, and a considerable time to the Nativity of Jesus Christ. A longer period even is put aside for the meditation of the Passion of our Lord; and the whole of Paschal time is set apart for the contemplation of the Resurrection; because upon this mystery our very religion and all our hopes are based.

It is from a like motive that, without making this devotion a part of her liturgy, the Church encourages us to consecrate the month of May to devotion to Mary, and to this end, opens to us her treasure of indulgences. She knows that to be devout to Mary belongs to the very essence of religion, and that the Blessed Virgin enters, with a fulness that words cannot describe, into the economy of the Redemption, and of our eternal salvation. If, indeed, Jesus is our Mediator with his Father, *unus mediator Dei et hominum, homo Christus Jesus*,—Tim. ii. 5, if it is through Him and by Him that all grace comes down to us, He willed, nevertheless, to give us a Mediatrix with his own adorable Person. He is our Saviour, but He will one day be our Judge; and as in his character of future Judge of the living and of the dead, He might inspire us with a fear which would greatly lessen our confidence in Him, He has given us his

Mother ; He has made her our Mother, and our sure refuge against the wrath of his justice. In her we shall find nothing but goodness and mercy, united to an irresistible power over the Heart of her Son. Doubtless, Jesus could save us without Mary ; but out of respect for her, and out of love for us, He has made Mary the repertory of his treasures, and He wills that all graces shall pass through her maternal hands. "God has willed that we should have everything through Mary," says St. Bernard. *Totum nos habere voluit per Mariam.*—*Ser. iii. in Vig. Nativ.* Hence, it is not less dangerous for us to withdraw ourselves from Mary's protection, than it would be for a child to try and do without its mother. No servant of Mary will ever be lost ; but at the same time, no one will be saved who is not a servant of Mary. Listen to St. Anselm : "As it is impossible that he from whom Mary turns aside should obtain salvation, so it is impossible for a man to be damned upon whom Mary casts her merciful eyes." *

If devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a necessary sign of predestination, it is assuredly an essential matter that we should have this devotion so indelibly imprinted upon our hearts that it can never be effaced. This is why, during an entire month, we devote ourselves in an especial manner to the honour of Mary.

But, perhaps, some one may think that we pay too much honour to one who is, after all, merely a creature, and that in giving so much to the Mother we shall take something away from that infinitely greater love which we owe to her Divine Son ? But, were it possible—which it is not—that God could address such a reproach to us, his own conduct towards Mary would be our ready excuse. "Thou, thyself, my Lord and God," we might say, "what hast Thou not done for Mary ? Thou hast chosen her, loved her, cherished her from all eternity ;

* De excell. Virg. ch. ii.

Thou hast created her immaculate, beyond conception more beautiful and pure than all the angels. Thou didst make her the Mother of God, and didst will that thine only Son should be her Son also. And by thy consent and will, did not thy Son, Jesus, consecrate, not thirty-one days only, but three and thirty years on earth to venerate, love, and obey her? And when Mary had passed, like Jesus, three days in the tomb, didst Thou not raise her up also? And didst Thou not send innumerable angels to carry her in triumph to heaven? What are our flowers and jewels in comparison with the glittering diamonds which shine in her heavenly crown? And with what raiment hast Thou clothed her? With the very splendours of Jesus, the Sun of Justice; so that there would seem to remain in her hardly anything of the creature, for she is in a manner shrouded in the glory of her Son. *Mulier amicta sole.* And what is our month of thirty-one days in comparison with a never-ending eternity, during which Thou wilt not cease to glorify her in the presence of all thy Angels and all thy Saints, to their great joy and the unspeakable joy of Jesus, thy Son and her Son?" Oh no! God will never think that the honour we pay to Mary is exaggerated; there is no danger of its lessening in the smallest degree the honour which we owe to God. For why is it that we honour the Blessed Virgin? Is it not because she is the Mother of Jesus? And is not all the reverent and loving homage which we offer to her really paid in the end to the immortal King of glory? Whatever may be the honour given to Mary by the Church of God, it never goes beyond that which is due to one who is the highest of all creatures, and its aim is ever the glory of God alone. We adore Jesus, the immortal King of Ages, Jesus our Saviour-God; we offer to Mary, his holy Mother, reverence, love, and confidence.

2° *Why do we consecrate the month of May to Mary*

in preference to any other month? *Firstly*, because this month symbolises and shadows the happiness which Mary's coming brought into the world. When the month of May appears, winter is over. *Jam hiems transiit*. Winter with its long nights, its gloom, its frosts, its unproductiveness, reminds us of the long centuries which elapsed before Mary's birth; those centuries during which the seed of the Divine promises was hidden beneath the snows of unbelief, deprived of the life-giving warmth of the Sun of Justice. And only then did the seed begin to spring up when Mary appeared; she who was the dawn of God's Day, who came amongst us to bear in her womb, and bring forth to the world, the Sun of Justice—the Saviour of the world. So, at the return of spring, all is born afresh, and nature reproduces all her charms. She then brings forth flowers alone; but blossoms fertilised and made to teem by the summer sun will give us fruit. In the same way, when Mary came into the world, the souls of men began to live again the joyful life of grace; and the angels ravished with the sublime spectacle, cried out: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?" *Quæ est ista quæ progreditur quasi Aurora consurgens*—Cant. vi. 9.

Secondly—The Blessed Virgin is gracious, and she is also the Mother of Divine grace. If we gather bright flowers to offer to our mother on her feast day, what month can we more suitably dedicate to Mary than the month of flowers? and why should we not offer these earliest smiles of awakening nature to the most gracious of mothers, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother? Then, again, are not flowers the fairest emblems of Mary's virtues? Let us offer her the lily as the emblem of her immaculate purity, the rose as the type of her charity, the violet as the symbol of her humility.

Thirdly.—We imitate the Apostles and the early Church. Whilst Jesus risen only showed Himself up to the time of his Ascension in appearances of short

duration, the apostles and the newly-converted Christians grouped themselves round Christ's Holy Mother. In fact, Jesus was going to leave her with them for a long time as yet, on purpose that she might fill the office of Mother towards the infant Church. We are imitating the early Church when we celebrate the Month of Mary, after the festival of the Resurrection.

Fourthly.—The month of Mary, at this season of the year, becomes a safeguard of our innocence. The witchery of spring is but too well calculated to arouse our sleeping passions and expose our heart to sin. The month of Mary, with its pious practices and devotions, fixes our imaginations and affections on the virginal heart of the most loving of mothers, and thus preserves us from the misfortune of offending her Divine Son.

3°: *What shall we do in order to celebrate worthily the Month of Mary?*

First.—Let us watch carefully over ourselves, above and before all, in order that we may do nothing that can displease Mary. Let us strive to avoid even the smallest faults; but whatever else we do, let us resolve not to wound her maternal heart, by crucifying her Son afresh by mortal sin. If anyone is so unhappy as not to be in a state of grace, let that person hasten at this beginning of the beautiful Month of Mary to reconcile himself to God by a good confession. The more pure we are the more pleasing shall we be to Mary; for her delight is amongst the lilies.

Secondly.—In order to attract others, and increase the piety of the faithful in our churches, let us, for love of Mary, assist in embellishing the altars erected in her honour, and in increasing the splendour of her worship; let us join our voices to those that are singing her praise. In the bosom of our own families, Mary must find her sanctuary and her little altar; or, at least, her image shall be decked with flowers, and

there the family assembled around her shall unite each evening in the prayers that bring the day to a close.

Thirdly.—In spite of bad weather and other difficulties, let us endeavour to be present at the public devotions of the Month of Mary, and give proof of our zeal by inducing others to bear us company.

Fourthly.—No day should pass without our being present at Holy Mass, and we ought to receive, at least once, Holy Communion in honour of Mary.

Fifthly and lastly.—Let us fix upon some one important grace to be obtained through the Month of Mary—a grace which we will seek perseveringly, and at the cost of any sacrifice.

One very natural object to keep before our mind, will be to obtain a solid, very tender, profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Let us then say with the Blessed Berchmans: “I will give myself no rest until I have attained to a very tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin.”

We may also very profitably bear in view various other objects, either in the spiritual order as, for example, the acquisition of some virtue, or the conversion of some one; or even in the temporal order, always, of course, submitting ourselves to God’s holy will.

What a consolation will it be for us at the hour of death if we shall have kept the Month of Mary with fervour and constancy, as it came round year by year, during our whole life. Then shall we understand those words of the Mother of God: “He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord—*Qui me invenerit inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino.*”—Prov. viii. 35.

AN EFFICACIOUS PRAYER TO MARY, OUR MOTHER.

My Queen and my Mother! to thee I offer myself without any reserve; and to give thee a mark of my devotion, I consecrate to thee during this day, my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, and my whole person. Since I belong to thee, O my good Mother! preserve and defend me as thy property and possession.

By a decree, *Urbi et Orbi* (August 5, 1851), our Holy Father Pope Pius IX. granted: 1°. One hundred days Indulgence, to be gained once a day for the above prayer, if recited morning and evening after a Hail Mary. 2°. A Plenary Indulgence once a month on the ordinary conditions.

EJACULATION IN TIME OF TEMPTATION.

My Queen and my Mother! remember that I belong to thee; preserve and defend me as thy property and possession.

Our Holy Father Pope Pius IX. granted an indulgence of forty days for using this ejaculation in time of temptation.

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Antoine

DENIS, S. J., ANTONY

AUTHOR

The Loving-Kindness of the Queen
of Heaven or The Salve
Regina in Meditations.

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